QUEEN VICTORIA

DAVID CARB
AND
WALTER PRICHARD EATON

DISCARD

QUEEN VICTORIA

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A Play in Seven Episodes

BY

DAVID CARB

AND

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

WITHDRAWN
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THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY:

ALEXANDRINA VICTORIA

THE DUCHESS OF KENT, *Her Mother*

FRÄULEIN LEHZEN

LADY GAY HAWTHORN

WILLIAM LAMB, *Viscount Melbourne*

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

LORD PALMERSTON

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

LORD CONYNGHAM, *the Lord Chamberlain*

STOCKMAR

PRINCE ALBERT OF COBURG

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

EDWARD, *Prince of Wales*

SIR JAMES CLARK

A FOOTMAN

Representatives of the Colonies and Dominions

FIRST EPISODE—Red Salon in Kensington Palace, June 20, 1837.

SECOND EPISODE—Reception Room in Buckingham Palace, October 10, 1839.

THIRD EPISODE—The Same, October 11, 1839.

FOURTH EPISODE—The Same, January, 1854.

FIFTH EPISODE—Bedroom of the Prince Consort, Buckingham Palace, December 13, 1861.

SIXTH EPISODE—The Same as Fourth Episode, the Early Seventies.

SEVENTH EPISODE—Throne Room in Buckingham Palace, June 20, 1897.

QUEEN VICTORIA

By

David Carb and Walter Prichard Eaton

Produced at the 48th Street Theatre, New York City, November 15th, 1923, by the Equity Players, Inc. (Harry O. Stubbs, Managing Director). Production staged by Priestly Morrison.

CAST

Alexandrina Victoria.....*Miss Beryl Mercer*
The Duchess of Kent.....*Miss Winifred Hanley*
Baroness Lehzen.....*Miss Anita Rothe*
Lady Gay Hawthorne.....*Miss Frances Goodrich*
Prince Albert of Coburg.....*Mr. Ullrich Haupt*
Edward, Prince of Wales.....*Mr. Arthur Maude*
William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne.....*Mr. Donald Cameron*
The Duke of Wellington.....*Mr. Joseph Denton*
The Archbishop of Canterbury.*Mr. Albert Tavernier*
Lord Palmerston.....*Mr. William Ingersoll*
Lord Conyngham.....*Mr. Herbert Standing, Jr.*
Baron Stockmar.....*Mr. Hubert Wilke*
Sir James Clarke.....*Mr. Herbert Farjeon*
Benjamin Disraeli.....*Mr. Clarence Derwent*
William Ewart Gladstone.....*Mr. George Farren*
A Footman.....*Mr. Borden Harriman*

Court Officials, Representatives of the Dominions and the Colonies and of the Army and the Navy. A Delegation of Workmen, etc.

James H. Bell—*Stage Manager*

Scenery, costumes and stage decorations designed by Mr. Woodman Thompson

FIRST EPISODE

Red Salon in Kensington Palace

June 20, 1837

FIRST EPISODE

It is five o'clock in the morning of June 20th, 1837.

The rising curtain discloses only dimness and silence, but slowly there emerge the outlines of a salon in Kensington Palace, a room seeming more spacious, perhaps, than it actually is, because of Wren's design. Near the audience, on their left, are tall doors, now closed, and opposite are tall windows, hidden now by heavy red draperies which permit only flecks of gray light to enter. At the rear, but vaguely seen, is an archway leading to other portions of the sleeping palace. There is no furniture in the salon, save a row of chairs standing stiffly along either side wall; their backs are straight and tall, and no doubt they are William and Mary, delicately carved and caned. One appears to be larger than the rest.

The slumberous silence is suddenly broken by a faint sound of hurrying horses, and then a great pounding on some outer door. Again silence. Then again the pounding, which ceases abruptly and is presently succeeded by a buzz of voices coming nearer. A sleepy young FOOTMAN *in extreme disarray—and it is a pity not to have buttoned so superb a jacket as he wears, over an ill-concealed nightshirt—throws open the great doors, and stands aside to admit the* ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY and LORD CONYNGHAM, *the Lord Chamberlain. Both these dignitaries*

are dishevelled and dusty, as you will see plainer presently, when the FOOTMAN *draws back the red window hangings and admits the light. They continue the conversation which we heard as they approached.*

CONYNGHAM

It can't wait. The Princess Victoria must be wakened.

ARCHBISHOP

A half hour or so . . . I myself feel the need of a little rest. We could perhaps doze in a chair.

CONYNGHAM

But, my lord, it is just five o'clock now. In a half hour or so Her Highness——

ARCHBISHOP

Her Majesty.

CONYNGHAM

Ah, yes, yes. Of course. It is hard to accustom oneself to these sudden changes. She will be no less disturbed by being awakened in a half hour or so than now.

ARCHBISHOP

Well, as you say.

(*He yawns. The* FOOTMAN *has crossed to the windows and thrown back the draperies. The light is abundant, but gray*

and dull. The fellow is trying frantically to button his jacket, smooth his hair, tuck in his nightshirt. And he is yet only partly awake. He is startled when addressed)

CONYNGHAM

You will inform your mistress that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain beg an audience.

FOOTMAN

My lords, I—er—the Princess——

CONYNGHAM

Eh?

FOOTMAN

I dare not interrupt her slumbers at this hour.

ARCHBISHOP

Do as you're bid.

(*The poor fellow goes out rear, much distressed*)

What a pity she is so young. If his majesty had lived a few years more——

CONYNGHAM

(*Lowering his voice*)

His Majesty lived too long.

ARCHBISHOP

Eh?

CONYNGHAM

No State secret, my lord. All the world knows that the King could not command even his own whims.

ARCHBISHOP

But this child, what does she know?

CONYNGHAM

She can be taught; the King could not learn.

ARCHBISHOP

Can she be taught? We know absolutely nothing of her. Here she has stayed with her German mother, and her German governess.

CONYNGHAM

Her "precious Lehzen," ha, ha!

ARCHBISHOP

And that subtle German, the Baron Stockmar. What have they taught her?

CONYNGHAM

She is only eighteen. She has the eagerness and sincerity of youth. His late Majesty had neither

youth nor eagerness nor sincerity nor the desire for them.

ARCHBISHOP

Has the Princess the desire? Is she proud, opinionated, narrow or receptive and——

CONYNGHAM

We, like England and the rest of the world, are entirely in the dark about her. She is the Great Enigma. Let us have faith. The first Queen of England in a century and a third!

ARCHBISHOP

The first Queen since good Queen Anne. . . . After all, England has been fortunate in her queens.

CONYNGHAM

(*Confidentially*)

England has been fortunate in her queens' ministers.

(THE DUCHESS OF KENT *comes through the rear doors. She is sleepy and thrown together*)

DUCHESS

My lords.

(*They bow. The mother of Victoria is flabby. She has assumed an enormous importance in her own estimation and her*

manner seems to be derived from a Laura Jean Libby conception of an aristocrat. There is an uncomfortable pause)

My lords?

ARCHBISHOP

We crave your pardon, Duchess, for intruding at this unseemly hour.

CONYNGHAM

Our errand is of such moment that we did not dare delay.

DUCHESS

Yes, my lords?

CONYNGHAM

If we might be received by the Princess Victoria——

DUCHESS

I am her mother.

CONYNGHAM

Yes, Your Grace. But it is necessary that we have audience of the Princess.

DUCHESS

I am the Princess' guardian.

CONYNGHAM

But in this instance, Your Grace——

DUCHESS

What is your errand, my lords?

CONYNGHAM

Well, we had hoped——

ARCHBISHOP

The King is dead!

DUCHESS

(*Flustered*)

Dead! The King! Then Drina is——

ARCHBISHOP

She is Queen of England. We must apprise her of that fact.

DUCHESS

At last! Queen! Drina!

ARCHBISHOP

Will you have the goodness to make known to Her Highness that we are come on an imperative affair of state?

DUCHESS

Drina! Queen! A mere child. Just past her eighteenth birthday. Last month—The twenty-fourth of May——

ARCHBISHOP

(*Sternly*)

Madam!

DUCHESS

My lord?

ARCHBISHOP

Kindly apprise the Princess——

DUCHESS

She is asleep. She never rises before seven.

ARCHBISHOP

The occasion is unusual.

CONYNGHAM

Let me urge Your Grace to delay no longer.

DUCHESS

It's an awful thing to be waked at five, even with the present of a crown.

(LEHZEN *enters. She is neatly dressed, in plain, rather rigid clothes. Her hair is well ordered, albeit prim. She shows no sleepiness, nor haste. For all her appearance indicates, it might be tea time*)

CONYNGHAM

Ah, Fräulein Lehzen.

LEHZEN

My Lord Chamberlain.

ARCHBISHOP

Fräulein.

LEHZEN

Your Grace.

CONYNGHAM

You will be overjoyed, Fräulein, to learn that the King is dead. I mean—that is to say—your charge is the heir apparent.

LEHZEN

(*Quite calmly. With an accent*)

Ah, that is *gut*.

ARCHBISHOP

At the behest of the Prime Minister we have preceded him here to apprise Her Highness of her accession. If we may be permitted to perform our mission.

DUCHESS

(*Not without asperity*)

She must not be awakened at this hour.

LEHZEN

(*Ignoring her. To the Archbishop*)

She shall be fetched.

(*She goes. The* DUCHESS *draws in her breath angrily and glares after the* GOVERNESS. *The two men look stonily into space, politely appearing not to be aware of her humiliation. But she finds the silence difficult*)

DUCHESS

It is very upsetting. I suppose we shall have to move to Buckingham Palace. I seem to have done nothing all my life but move. Tell me, my lords, is Buckingham comfortable? I have seen only the State apartments. The late King was not fond of us.

CONYNGHAM

You will find it all that could be desired. Modern in every way. The throne room is illuminated by gas from the great chandeliers.

DUCHESS

(*Ecstatically*)

Gas! That will be marvellous. My lords, do you think Drina——?

(*She stops. For* VICTORIA *slips in at the rear. She is only slightly awake—a sim-*

ple, sweet, unsophisticated girl, who can scarcely keep her eyes open. She holds a plain dressing gown tightly together, a curl paper adorns her forehead, her hair is plaited and hangs down her back. Her feet are in bedroom slippers. Her face at the moment is blank and bewildered)

(*The two men fall to their knees*)

DUCHESS

(*With a little scream*)

Drina! To come like that!

CONYNGHAM

We are come to apprise Your Majesty that the King is dead.

(*When addressed as "Majesty" a faint smile of satisfaction comes over her face*)

VICTORIA

He is dead! Oh, I'm *so* sorry.

CONYNGHAM

As the daughter of the late Duke of Kent, the fourth son of King George III——

VICTORIA

I am—the—the—I am—

ARCHBISHOP

(*Mercifully*)

We are come, also, to inform Your Majesty——

(*Again the smile of satisfaction on her face. She murmurs: "Majesty"*)

—that his late Majesty died calmly, like a good Christian, at peace with God and man.

(*There is the faintest hint of sarcasm in his voice*)

CONYNGHAM

As the daughter of the late Duke of Kent, Your Majesty is the heir to the throne.

VICTORIA

(*Still dazed*)

I am Queen of England!

(*An expression of wonderment passes over her face. She stands like a bedraggled Jeanne d'Arc. The* FOOTMAN, *now immaculate, enters from the left and brings* VICTORIA *an imposingly sealed envelope. The two officials rise. She is utterly bewildered. She stares at the letter on the salver as though it were a sacred relic. The* ARCHBISHOP *and* LORD CHAMBERLAIN *bow themselves out. Her eyes follow them*)

I am Queen of England!

(*She is frightened, as the realization soaks in*)

Oh, Mamma, I—I——

DUCHESS

Take it.

(VICTORIA *looks at her mother blankly, takes the letter and holds it limply*)

Read it.

(VICTORIA *opens it, reads it—her lips spelling out the words—then looks up dully*)

What does it say?

VICTORIA

"The Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, craves of Her Majesty"—Majesty! Queen of England. . . . Mamma, I am *Queen*. . . .

DUCHESS

(*Seizing the letter*)

Tsct! "Craves an audience before the arrival of the Councillors of State." Send an answer.

(*The Queen looks scared*)

Tell him——

VICTORIA

Yes.

(*To* FOOTMAN)

Tell my lord Melbourne that I—that the Queen—that Her Majesty—Majesty. . . .

DUCHESS

Go on.

VICTORIA

Her Majesty will—will——

(LEHZEN *enters.* VICTORIA *runs to her*)

Lehzen, Lord Melbourne craves an audience, and then there will be a Council of State.

LEHZEN

(*Holding her hand, addressing the* FOOTMAN)

Her Majesty will receive Lord Melbourne at once.

VICTORIA

Not—not in *this!*

(*She pats her dressing gown*)

DUCHESS

You must dress.

LEHZEN

(*To* VICTORIA)

Lord Melbourne must not be kept waiting.

DUCHESS

Drina, it's absolutely immodest to appear before people in a peignoir.

(LEHZEN *pats her pupil reassuringly*)

I won't permit it.

(STOCKMAR *enters*

LEHZEN

You've heard?

(*He nods*)

Lord Melbourne wishes to see Drina.

DUCHESS

Drina mustn't see him like that.

STOCKMAR

(*Mildly*)

The Prime Minister will not be shocked—he is an elderly man.

VICTORIA

It's—it's not *proper.*

STOCKMAR

Your informality will be an indication of your seriousness.

(VICTORIA *smiles, completely reassured. The* DUCHESS *is peeved*)

DUCHESS

I suppose Baron Stockmar is the final authority on these little niceties.

(*They don't heed her*)

LEHZEN

It would be better for Drina's manner to be informal also. Impulsive, friendly.

STOCKMAR

Yes, but dignified.

VICTORIA

What will I say to him?

STOCKMAR

"I am very happy"—No—"I have the desire"—That won't do either. "It has long been my intention to retain Your Lordship and the rest of the Ministry at the head of affairs." That's it.

VICTORIA

"It has long been my—my——"

LEHZEN

Intention.

VICTORIA

"It has long been my intention to retain Your Lordship and the rest of the Ministry at the head of affairs."

LEHZEN

Gut!

VICTORIA

"It has long been my intention . . ."

(*She repeats the words silently*)

(*The* FOOTMAN *throws open the doors with a great flourish.* LEHZEN *and* STOCKMAR *go out at the rear. The* DUCHESS *follows angrily*)

Lehzen, stay with me!

FOOTMAN

Lord Melbourne!

(*The* PRIME MINISTER *is in full court dress, in striking contrast to the disarray of the Queen. He raises* VICTORIA'S *hand and kisses it. She gulps and then repeats* STOCKMAR'S *words meticulously, like a school-girl repeating a lesson*)

VICTORIA

It has long been my intention to retain Your Lordship and the rest of the Ministers at the head of affairs.

(*The stately, elderly man bows again over her hand, kisses it, and is backing out, his eyes regarding her with curiosity. She catches his glance, sees it is kindly and benevolent, smiles in a shy, girlish, impulsive way, and takes a step toward him*)

Will you—will you be my friend?

(*He straightens, smiles*)

MELBOURNE

May I be your friend?

VICTORIA

If you only would! I am somewhat afraid.

MELBOURNE

There is nothing to fear.

VICTORIA

I haven't had much—much practice in being a queen.

MELBOURNE

It is Providence, not practice, that makes a queen, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

But practice and a nice prime minister will help, I am *sure*.

MELBOURNE

I shall strive to be the nicest prime minister in the world.

VICTORIA

(*Extending her hand*)

Oh, we will be the *greatest* friends.

(*He presses her hand and goes. She stands looking dreamily after him, the smile still on her face. The* DUCHESS, LEHZEN *and* STOCKMAR *return*)

LEHZEN

You had better dress now, Drina.

DUCHESS

(*Snappily*)

Naturally!

LEHZEN

Come, my dear.

DUCHESS

(*Freezing the* GOVERNESS)

Come, Drina.

(VICTORIA *starts toward* LEHZEN, *has an instant of doubt, and dutifully, like a little girl, goes with her mother*)

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VICTORIA

Am I really and truly Queen, Mamma?

DUCHESS

You see, my dear, that it is so.

VICTORIA

Then, dear Mamma, I hope you will grant me the first request I make to you as Queen.

DUCHESS

You can command now, my child.

VICTORIA

Then I will command that my bed be moved out of your room.

(*They go, the elder woman not at all pleased.* LEHZEN *watches her charge affectionately. She and* STOCKMAR *speak with heavy Teutonic accents.*)

STOCKMAR

Her first decision as Queen is sensible.

LEHZEN

(*Indulging in one of her rare smiles*)

It is evident the Duchess will not rule England.

STOCKMAR

No one but the Duchess ever supposed she would.

(*A pause*)

LEHZEN

And so, Baron, it has come at last. Our pupil takes her place.

STOCKMAR

She sits upon the mightiest throne in the world.

LEHZEN

So young, so inexperienced!

STOCKMAR

But positive. An indiscreet person might call her stubborn. That will help her to gain experience.

LEHZEN

Quite the contrary. But it will help her not to be discouraged by her inexperience. Or indeed to realize it.

STOCKMAR

(*Bowing*)

I marvel constantly at your wisdom, my dear Fräulein.

LEHZEN

We have given her an *überwaltigend* sense of the dignity of her position. It is that will aid her most.

STOCKMAR

That—and us.

LEHZEN

She will still need us.

STOCKMAR

More than ever. My dear Fräulein, we must be cautious.

LEHZEN

Ah yes, cautious.

STOCKMAR

Lest our affection harm her. She will lean heavily upon us.

LEHZEN

Poor Duchess!

STOCKMAR

I fear her sun has set.

LEHZEN

Yes . . .

STOCKMAR

During these early years of her reign we two, whom she trusts and respects, must guide her. We shall

have to be very wise and most austere with ourselves. We must set aside our fondness for her and consider only our responsibility.

LEHZEN

It is great—our responsibility—to her, to England, to Germany.

STOCKMAR

Exactly. Only with our guidance can she rule England.

LEHZEN

And make a German marriage.

STOCKMAR

That is the first thing we must settle.

(*The* FOOTMAN *throws open the doors at the left with a grand flourish*)

LEHZEN

Here are the councillors.

STOCKMAR

We had better advise her how to address them.

(*To the* FOOTMAN)

Arrange the room for Her Majesty.

(*They go out rear*)

FOOTMAN

(*Announcing*)

His Grace, the Duke of Wellington.

(*The* DUKE, *in full court costume, as are all the others, enters pompously and bows with respect, but discovering that* VICTORIA *is not present, straightens and crosses to the windows*)

Viscount Melbourne; His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Lord Conyngham; Lord Palmerston.

(LORD PALMERSTON *is slightly over fifty, debonair, dashing, supremely confident, flamboyantly dressed, his whiskers obviously dyed. No one speaks until they have all been announced and have entered. The* FOOTMAN *then places the largest chair in the centre and leaves the others against the walls. He exits rear*)

WELLINGTON

I've heard she's wilful.

MELBOURNE

I don't know about that, but she's charmingly spontaneous.

ARCHBISHOP

A child—a mere child.

CONYNGHAM

When we addressed her she seemed frightened, like a little school-girl.

PALMERSTON

She would indeed be callous, were she not frightened when a Lord Chamberlain and an Archbishop invade her privacy at five in the morning.

ARCHBISHOP

Really!

MELBOURNE

Palmerston!

PALMERSTON

Your pardon, my lords. I am forever forgetting how anything bare shocks Church and State. Even the bare truth.

WELLINGTON

Have you ever had a decent thought, Palmerston?

PALMERSTON

Occasionally, but it is not necessary. Indecency is the normal state of man. In youth it is condoned; in age it is called worldly wisdom.

CONYNGHAM

(*Ignoring him elaborately*)

I was saying that the Queen seemed frightened, like a little girl, this morning.

PALMERSTON

Maybe just sleepy, Conyngham. One's eyes are singularly infantile when one is aroused at five o'clock in the morning. I myself do not appear altogether adult at that hour.

(*Crossing to* WELLINGTON)

And you, my lord,—you also resemble a bewildered urchin when you first awake, I have no doubt.

(*The* DUKE *turns with cold deliberation, stares at the younger man, his face impassive. He then re-turns to the window.* MELBOURNE *chuckles.* CONYNGHAM *and the* ARCHBISHOP *are amused at* PALMERSTON'S *effrontery. He is not in the least taken down by the great man's snub. Continuing*)

Yet there is a fine symbol in the Queen being aroused by Church and State to be informed of her glory and her duty just as the sun rises in the East. For the great glory of Queen Alexandrina Victoria will lie in the East.

WELLINGTON

(*Sharply*)

Her glory and honor and duty will lie right on this island.

PALMERSTON

In the matter of prophecy the indomitable Duke of Wellington and the poorest cockney are equals.

MELBOURNE

(*To change the subject*)

Too bad Lord John Russell can't come to greet the new Queen.

WELLINGTON

Why can't he?

PALMERSTON

He danced till late with Lady Gay Hawthorn, and 'tis said he must complete his dream of her.

(*Once more the* DUKE *turns to stare at the fellow, and re-turns to the window*)

MELBOURNE

What dream has Peel that keeps him from the Council?

PALMERSTON

'Tis June, my lord, and Sir Robert must a-hunting go. All in green, they say, like Robin Hood—or a grasshopper.

ARCHBISHOP

It's a scant gathering to welcome the new Queen!

PALMERSTON

Scant in numbers. But in quality!

(*The* DUKE *sneezes*)

Ah, the great Duke of Wellington agrees with me at last!

WELLINGTON

Shut up!

PALMERSTON

If His Grace would but deign to glance at me, he would discover that I am not a mere Napoleon to be banished by a frown.

WELLINGTON

I wish to God a word of mine might banish you to St. Helena or to Hell.

CONYNGHAM

Palmerston is impertinent.

MELBOURNE

He dares to be. God pity him if he were of a lesser family.

ARCHBISHOP

Ah yes. He knows full well that the Duke is the child and champion of aristocracy.

MELBOURNE

It takes courage even for an aristocrat to chaff the great victor of Waterloo.

ARCHBISHOP

I catch sarcasm in your tone, Lord Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

Your Grace has a keen ear.

WELLINGTON

What is the hour, Melbourne?

MELBOURNE

I am sorry not to be able to inform Your Grace. I never carry a timepiece; I always ask the servant what o'clock it is, and then he tells me what he likes.

CONYNGHAM

It lacks twenty minutes of six o'clock, sir.

(WELLINGTON *gazes out the window again*)

PALMERSTON

I do hope Her Majesty outlasts my time. These early hours!

(*Yawns*)

CONYNGHAM

It would have been considerate of His late Majesty to live a few hours longer.

(*Yawns*)

MELBOURNE

Or several less.

(*Yawns*)

ARCHBISHOP

(*Yawning*)

Uh—h—h.

MELBOURNE

It is a difficult moment for a young girl to ascend the throne. The Irish question——

PALMERSTON

The Irish question will always be with us. Only three people have ever really understood it—Castelreagh who is dead, a German professor who has gone mad, and I who have forgotten.

CONYNGHAM

Her Majesty will be greatly aided in her difficulties by her youth and girlhood. The people will be enthusiastic about her.

WELLINGTON

Haven't you learned yet that you can trust nothing to the enthusiasm of the people?

CONYNGHAM

But her popularity will assist——

WELLINGTON

Popularity is low and vulgar.

PALMERSTON

Who should know better than the Duke of Wellington, the idol of two generations!

WELLINGTON

What's she like, Melbourne?

MELBOURNE

A charming girl.

WELLINGTON

Damme, that's not what I want to know. What sort of a queen of England will she be?

PALMERSTON

His Grace mistakes you for a soothsayer.

MELBOURNE

She is clay, my lord, and events and her councillors will be the potter. She can be made anything or everything.

PALMERSTON

Or nothing?

MELBOURNE

She will be something. I have had but a brief interview with Her Majesty, but in those few moments I realized that she has character—will and pertinacity.

PALMERSTON

The regulation German virtues.

(*Yawns*)

When shall we be annexed by Coburg?

ARCHBISHOP

Has she imagination?

MELBOURNE

I hope not. All of her line have been lost whenever they have not stood solidly on the ground.

PALMERSTON

Then she is but the four Georges in petticoats.

MELBOURNE

I did not say that.

ARCHBISHOP

We shall see.

(*The* FOOTMAN, *gorgeous now, flings open the doors at the rear*)

FOOTMAN

Her most excellent Majesty, Queen Alexandrina Victoria.

(*They all assume deeply respectful attitudes. The* QUEEN *enters, pale, nervous*

—a girlish figure in deep mourning. She hesitates an instant, then moves to the chair at center and stands before it uncertainly. She sits bolt upright. A long silence. The QUEEN *wishes she knew what to do. She makes as though to rise, but thinks better of it. She glances over her shoulder, hoping to see* STOCKMAR *or* LEHZEN. *But the great doors are closed. As though guilty, she returns her gaze to the front. Another long silence, during which the men glance sidewise at each other*)

VICTORIA

(*In a weak, timid voice*)

My lords.

(*She swallows hard. They bow deeply. Again an uncomfortable silence. She speaks in a most stilted manner, as if the words had been learned by heart, as indeed they have been*)

Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country; I am very young, and perhaps in many things inexperienced, but few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have.

(*A pause*)

MELBOURNE

(*Advancing a step*)

All England welcomes your Majesty's accession to the throne with faith and confidence and rejoicing. Your Majesty's ministers have the inestimable privilege of being the servants and the instruments of the Queen. They bend their knees in reverence before her greatness. She is the Symbol of England. What she is all loyal citizens will strive to become; to all the world she will stand as a model and an example——.

VICTORIA

(*Murmuring to herself*)

Example! . . .

MELBOURNE

We pray Her most gracious Majesty to receive this document——

(*He offers an impressive paper heavily sealed*)

VICTORIA

(*Frightened, awed, amazed*)

Example to all the world. . .

(*Automatically her hand reaches for the paper. Suddenly a band outside plays the national air. Startled, her hand drops. As the music proceeds* VICTORIA *is more and*

more moved. She clutches the arms of her chair. Absolute silence until the music stops. She has risen)

VICTORIA

(*With the simplicity and the fervor of a little girl praying*)

I will be good! I will be good!

(*Slowly she reaches her hand toward* MELBOURNE *for the paper, smiling mistily into his face*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SECOND EPISODE

Reception Room in Buckingham Palace

October 10, 1839

SECOND EPISODE

It is two years later, and almost twilight of the afternoon of October 10th, 1839.

The room is an antechamber of VICTORIA'S *apartments in Buckingham Palace. On one side is a fine Georgian chimney piece, but with no fire in the grate. Conspicuous on this Georgian mantel are an ugly Empire clock, two Dresden china groups, and a quite terrible vase. Opposite are double doors, now closed. The furniture of the room is, in the main, Empire, and includes a clawfoot sofa of great beauty. But two or three rosewood chairs with seats upholstered in red have somehow insinuated themselves, and are standing about in haphazard fashion, and there is a rosewood table with what appear to be albums piled on a shelf across the stretchers, and a small rosewood square piano of the latest make. At an Empire tea table—at least, it is being used for tea—are seated the* DUCHESS, LEHZEN, *and* VICTORIA. *It is pleasant to fancy that they are using a Bristol tea set.*

LEHZEN *is sprinkling caraway seeds, which she takes from a small package, meticulously over her muffin. The* QUEEN *is, alas, sitting bolt upright and gobbling like a hungry girl of humble and uncertain parentage.*

VICTORIA

Lehzen, ring for more muffins, please.

(*Her voice is muffled by the food through which it must pass*)

LEHZEN

Pardon?

VICTORIA

More muffins, please.

LEHZEN

Muffins?

VICTORIA

Yes, dear.

(*With a smile*)

You are growing deaf.

LEHZEN

Not yet, Drina.

VICTORIA

You *don't* hear well.

LEHZEN

I fear the fault is not mine. If you would eat slower and not try to talk with food in your mouth——

DUCHESS

(*Interrupting her*)

You are constantly forgetting, Fräulein, that Drina is no longer your pupil. She is the Queen of England.

LEHZEN

All the more need to call attention to her little—shortcomings.

DUCHESS

The Queen can have no shortcomings. What she does sets the fashion.

VICTORIA

(*Like a little girl to her school mistress*)

Do I eat badly, Lehzen?

LEHZEN

You gobble, my dear.

DUCHESS

Drina, this is insufferable. If you gobble, then gobbling is the correct way to eat. Besides, for a Queen of England to be dictated to by a woman with a positive passion for caraway seeds——

(*Addressing* LEHZEN *direct*)

—in your soup, on your bread, your roast beef, and even dessert—caraway seeds! As if you were a canary. Your resemblance to a canary is really rather remote.

(*She smiles at her own wit.* LEHZEN *merely purses her lips; and* VICTORIA *has not heard; she has been thinking over* LEHZEN'S *reproof*)

VICTORIA

I *must* be more deliberate in taking food.

(*The* FOOTMAN *enters*)

LEHZEN

Muffins.

(*He bows and is going*)

DUCHESS

It is cold in here. Lay a fire.

FOOTMAN

Pardon, Your Grace, but that cannot be done.

VICTORIA

(*Comfortably*)

Is the chimney faulty?

FOOTMAN

No, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Then we will have a fire.

FOOTMAN

There is no one to lay it.

DUCHESS

Why can't you?

FOOTMAN

I am under the Lord Chamberlain, Your Grace. We light the fires, but the Lord Steward lays them. There is a slight misunderstanding at present, the first since her Majesty's accession, between the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Steward, so nothing in the way of fire can be done.

DUCHESS

This is intolerable.

VICTORIA

I think we ought to inquire into this.

LEHZEN

(*To* FOOTMAN)

Does that explain why the windows are so coated with dust that we can scarcely see through them?

FOOTMAN

Not exactly, Fräulein Lehzen. We, the Lord Chamberlain, we clean the insides of the windows, but the outside is under the Office of Woods and Forests. I think Your Ladyship will find that you cannot see through the windows because of what's on the *outside* of the panes.

(*He shakes his head*)

Will that be all?

LEHZEN

Yes.

VICTORIA

I think I will not have more muffins.

(FOOTMAN *bows and goes out*)

LEHZEN

But you have not had enough.

DUCHESS

The child is afraid to eat.

VICTORIA

I'm not afraid, Mamma. Thank you, Lehzen, for calling my attention to how I eat. I *will* watch my manners.

DUCHESS

Why should you? The Fräulein is always on hand to watch them for you.

VICTORIA

It is really chillier in here than I thought.

DUCHESS

This state of affairs cannot be tolerated. You must speak to Lord Melbourne.

LEHZEN

The Prime Minister has no control over the organization of the Household.

VICTORIA

A Queen ought to have a fire to keep warm.

DUCHESS

I shall speak to the Duke of Wellington!

(*It is a trump*)

LEHZEN

Even the mighty Duke is powerless to light a fire in the Royal apartments.

VICTORIA

It's October now, and soon winter will come.

LEHZEN

Only an Act of Parliament can rearrange the Household affairs.

VICTORIA

I shall command the Prime Minister to take up the matter of a fire in my apartments in the House of Commons.

(*No one of the three sees anything ridiculous in this situation*)

DUCHESS

That will require time. And meanwhile the atmosphere will be cold when our Prince arrives.

(VICTORIA *frowns*)

Drina dear, I am going to remove that vase from the mantelpiece.

VICTORIA

Why?

DUCHESS

It is ugly.

VICTORIA

I like it.

DUCHESS

It is French and does not go well with the German ornaments beside it.

LEHZEN

The clock is French, too.

VICTORIA

I am *very* partial to that vase, Mamma.

DUCHESS

Albert has a most delicate sense of fitness. The vase will be offensive to him.

(*She compromises—shoves the vase back*)

VICTORIA

(*Slowly*)

I do so wish Cousin Albert were not coming to visit me.

LEHZEN

(*With unusual animation*)

That is because you have not seen him since you were a child. Never has there been a more admirable Prince. He is handsome as a god—tall and slender and *refined*. And in character absolutely upright. He has none of the young men's vices. And so *gemüthlich*.

VICTORIA

So you have told me often.

LEHZEN

Don't you remember how delighted you were, Drina, when your two cousins visited you several years ago? How happy you were, sitting between them on the sofa and looking through your album! You said it was the *greatest* fun.

VICTORIA

(*Smiling a little*)

It was. Albert is a *very* fine *cousin.*

DUCHESS

He will make a very fine husband.

VICTORIA

(*Annoyed*)

I don't want a husband.

DUCHESS

You must marry someone, my dear.

VICTORIA

I don't want to marry *anybody.*

LEHZEN

You wrote me after that visit of his, "Albert possesses *every* quality that could be *desired* to render me *perfectly* happy."

VICTORIA

That was long ago. I was only a *child*.

LEHZEN

He will soon arrive and you will see——

VICTORIA

I don't *want* to marry Albert—or anybody.

FOOTMAN

(*Announcing*)

The Prime Minister, Viscount Melbourne.

(VICTORIA'*s face lights up*)

VICTORIA

(*Delighted*)

Oh, Lord Melbourne!

(*Her manner changes. She becomes the* QUEEN; *she has been a girl being married off. With the hint of a flourish*)

Pray, leave me.

(*The two women go*)

We will receive the Prime Minister.

(*The* FOOTMAN *opens the door and* MELBOURNE *enters*)

Oh, my friend.

(*He kisses her hand*)

How have you been? It is *two* days since I have seen you.

MELBOURNE

I have been occupied with Your Majesty's affairs.

VICTORIA

But you could have found a *moment* to call. I am *so* disturbed, my lord.

MELBOURNE

Disturbed, Your Majesty?

VICTORIA

Everybody involves me in things I would be free of.

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty is a Queen.

VICTORIA

I am also a *woman.*

MELBOURNE

That is why I craved this audience. Prince Albert has arrived in London and will soon wait upon Your Majesty, so I hastened here to discuss certain details of the betrothal.

VICTORIA

Oh, how can you be so *blunt!* My lord, I like and admire my Cousin Albert very much, but I do not care to marry him.

MELBOURNE

(*Blandly*)

Your Majesty has not seen the Prince in many years. He has grown into a man of unusual distinction, both physically and mentally. Indeed, Baron Stockmar says that his intellect is extraordinarily keen and well-ordered. He is handsome.

VICTORIA

His letters are *most* interesting.

MELBOURNE

One cannot imagine anyone more ideal for a husband.

VICTORIA

I am quite happy as I am.

MELBOURNE

Pardon, Your Majesty. But you must see why it is impossible for you to remain as you are.

VICTORIA

I have a *great* repugnance, my lord, to changing my present condition.

MELBOURNE

(*With some firmness*)

You will have to overcome your repugnance.

VICTORIA

I think we need not pursue the subject further. At present *my* feeling is quite against marrying anyone.

MELBOURNE

In that case, should anything happen to Your Majesty, your uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, now King of Hanover, would succeed to the throne.

VICTORIA

Oh that would be a calamity! He is dreadful! Horrible!

MELBOURNE

Yet he would be the next King of England unless your Majesty has an—unless there is an—er—heir.

VICTORIA

(*Shocked*)

My lord!

(*Averting her head. Mumbling*)

An heir—Cousin Albert. . . .

(*She shudders—a pause*)

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty asked me to be her friend.

VICTORIA

I need you for a friend—now more than ever.

MELBOURNE

May I say that I comprehend the distaste such considerations must arouse in a young lady? Having to mention them, let me assure you, has required not a little effort. It is so delicate a subject to touch on. I understand your maidenly modesty.

(*A pause*)

But you are the Queen of England, and your duty is two-fold: You must rule and you must provide the —er—the next ruler.

VICTORIA

But, my lord, I feel I cannot.

MELBOURNE

Then the Duke of Cumberland, in case of any misfortune to you——

VICTORIA

Oh, no, no . . . My lord, if I should like my Cousin Albert I can make no *final promise this year,* for, at the *very earliest* any such event could not take place till two or three years hence. Lord Melbourne, *must* Albert come to-day? Couldn't his visit be postponed till some later time?

MELBOURNE

How could it be? He has probably already arrived at the Palace. What excuse could we make?

VICTORIA

If I were ill?

MELBOURNE

The Queen of England will not stoop to subterfuge.

(*A long pause*)

VICTORIA

It must be understood that there is *no engagement* between us.

MELBOURNE

Most certainly.

VICTORIA

That must be quite clear. For I am *very* anxious that *whatever* eventuates I could not be considered guilty of any breach of promise, for I *never gave any*.

MELBOURNE

That is clearly understood. Between ourselves—friends—why has Your Majesty this disaffection for marriage?

VICTORIA

How can I *look* at him, knowing that I am expected to—that he is expected to—that we——

MELBOURNE

Young people do look at each other knowing—er—er——

VICTORIA

Not for love or marriage, but simply to provide—er—er——

(*She blushes furiously. To relieve her embarrassment,* MELBOURNE *coughs and averts his face.* VICTORIA *is thus able to get control of her maidenly modesty. In a small voice*)

I am still *very* young.

MELBOURNE

Not too young to rule a great empire.

VICTORIA

Even a Queen may dream of love, my lord.

MELBOURNE

Oh, you have been reading that persuasive romancer, Walter Scott.

VICTORIA

This is no romantic idea, my lord. I am fully conscious of my responsibilities. And that is why I want to learn to be a Queen before I learn to be a mo—er—a wife.

MELBOURNE

The first lesson will be easy for so apt a pupil.

(*A low bow*)

VICTORIA

(*Pleased*)

You flatter, my lord.

MELBOURNE

And as for the second—learning to be Albert's wife —I fancy when you see him——

VICTORIA

(*Drawing herself up haughtily. Already she has learned much about being a Queen*)

The whole subject, my lord, is an odious one.

(STOCKMAR *enters*)

STOCKMAR

Pardon, Your Majesty, for thus intruding. But Prince Albert attends.

(*She becomes the flustered girl again.* MELBOURNE *recedes into the background, watching her anxiously. He starts to put in a word now and then, but thinks better of it*)

VICTORIA

Not yet, Stockmar. I am—I am not—ready.

STOCKMAR

The Prince is in the anteroom.

VICTORIA

But I *can't* see him *now.*

(LEHZEN *enters*)

STOCKMAR

The Prince would be somewhat hurt to be kept waiting.

VICTORIA

Show him over the Palace. I shall meet him at dinner to-night.

LEHZEN

Drina, it is your duty.

VICTORIA

I can't *look* at him.

STOCKMAR

Your Majesty is the head of the State.

VICTORIA

I shall *abhor* him.

LEHZEN

Only imagination, my dear.

VICTORIA

How could it be otherwise?

STOCKMAR

This is an affair of State. The Queen must consider only her duty.

(*This is spoken impressively, and it has its effect*)

VICTORIA

Stay with me, Lehzen.

LEHZEN

(*Relieved that the victory is won*)

Now, my dear, you are not going to falter in your duty.

VICTORIA

What *can* I *say* to him?

LEHZEN

He is your cousin. Receive him in true cousinly fashion.

VICTORIA

I shall be so *embarrassed* knowing that he knows that I—that he—that we——

LEHZEN

You will be brave.

(*She and* STOCKMAR *exeunt.* MELBOURNE *is following*)

VICTORIA

You will remain, Lord Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty!

VICTORIA

Stockmar said this is an affair of State.

MELBOURNE

It is a great affair of State and must therefore be transacted in private behind guarded doors.

VICTORIA

How awful! A transaction!

MELBOURNE

My word was unfortunate.

VICTORIA

You could remain over there—in the shadows.

MELBOURNE

That would scarcely be fair to the Prince.

VICTORIA

Think of *me!*

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty will have to be alone with him sooner or later.

VICTORIA

(*Shuddering*)

Oh, I do wish I did not have to see him *ever.*

(MELBOURNE *goes. She is unpleasantly agitated. Her face is contorted in an expression of repugnance and maidenly terror. She watches the door through which the guest is to come with fascinated fear. It opens,* ALBERT *enters, it closes. He is twenty; in full uniform. Looking beyond*

him she draws herself up primly, with dignity. He bows with stiff, elaborate punctiliousness. She extends her hand—he kisses it. A long pause)

We are pleased to welcome you.

ALBERT

(*With a heavy accent*)

Your Majesty is gracious.

VICTORIA

I trust you had a pleasant journey.

ALBERT

Most pleasant. The landscapes were beautiful in their autumn colorings.

VICTORIA

I trust your parents, our aunt and uncle, are enjoying good health.

ALBERT

I am happy to state that they are in excellent health.

VICTORIA

And our Uncle Leopold of Belgium?

ALBERT

He is also very well and contented.

(*The conversation lags. The* QUEEN *maintains her prim dignity. The* PRINCE *regards her calmly, penetratingly, but she has not really looked at him. The silence becomes uncomfortable*)

Ah, Your Majesty is fond of the china ornaments from Dresden.

VICTORIA

They are most pretty.

(*He goes to the mantel where the ornaments are not strictly aligned. He aligns them*)

ALBERT

They are subtly made, Dresden china ornaments. It is miraculous how so many can be manufactured and yet the beauty of each one be conserved.

(*She steals glances at his back, and unbends perceptibly*)

In the year 1837,—5,461 pieces were fabricated in Dresden.

VICTORIA

Wonderful!

(*She really thinks so*)

ALBERT

Last year, 1838, they manufactured 6,003 pieces.

VICTORIA

How *can* they?

ALBERT

German workmen perform miracles.

VICTORIA

So I have been told many times.

ALBERT

Ah, this is nice.

(*The vase*)

VICTORIA

Do you like it?

ALBERT

Very much. Very much, indeed.

(*She claps her hands and bounces on her chair—a little girl proved right. All stiffness disappears.* ALBERT *has justified her and her taste. She goes upstage to him*)

VICTORIA

We seem to have the same taste. I *love* the clock, too.

(*It is incredibly ornate*)

ALBERT

One learns to love things that are near.

(*The conversation dies again. He places the tongs on the opposite side of the fireplace from the shovel, comes down from the mantel, and during the next few speeches places the chairs in a stiff line*)

VICTORIA

We go to Windsor to-morrow for the day.

ALBERT

That will be most pleasant.

(*Once more the deadly silence. But she has been watching him ordering the chairs with interest—in him, not in the chairs*)

VICTORIA

(*Suddenly the young girl*)

This is not at all what I expected.

ALBERT

No?

VICTORIA

I thought you would be—different.

ALBERT

(*After all, he is only twenty*)

I was afraid to form a picture of you.

VICTORIA

Why?

ALBERT

Because you were sure to be unlike the picture and then I—would have to adjust myself to the reality.

VICTORIA

Are you disappointed?

ALBERT

(*Smiling*)

That is a question *I* should ask.

VICTORIA

It would not be proper for a young girl to say what she thinks.

ALBERT

So terrible as that!

VICTORIA

(*Confused*)

Oh, I didn't mean it that way at all. I meant to say—I meant that a young girl must *never* betray her feelings.

ALBERT

But between cousins.

VICTORIA

We are cousins, but we don't really *know* each other yet.

ALBERT

How could we? We have met only once before this.

VICTORIA

Oh, that was a fine visit you and your brother, Ernest, made to us. How is Cousin Ernest?

ALBERT

He has developed rapidly.

VICTORIA

We were all *mere children* when you were here before. You and Cousin Ernest wore knickerbockers, and I was still in pinafores.

ALBERT

Kensington Palace was so orderly.

(*He has finished with the chairs*)

VICTORIA

Do you remember what *fun* we had sitting on the sofa, I in the middle, between you and Cousin Ernest, looking through my album?

ALBERT

Oh, I shall never forget that album. Ernest and I have often spoken of it.

VICTORIA

It's grown, like you and Ernest and me. It is no longer an album—it is *albums*. Would you like to see the last one?

ALBERT

Oh, yes.

(*She takes it from the undershelf of the table. He pushes a chair toward her*)

VICTORIA

Oh, no—on the sofa as before.

(*He puts the chair back on the same spot from which he had moved it*)

Sit here beside me.

ALBERT

Who is that?

VICTORIA

Madame de Spaeth. She was one of my governesses. She had this miniature made just for me.

ALBERT

Oh, here you are in your coronation robes. We have a picture like it at home in Coburg.

VICTORIA

In oils, but this is only watercolors.

ALBERT

(*As playful as he can be*)

You conferred it upon us.

VICTORIA

Where do you keep it?

ALBERT

In mother's drawing-room.

VICTORIA

(*Disappointed*)

Oh. . . . This is the way I really looked at the time of my coronation.

ALBERT

(*Regarding the picture and then the reality*)

You have changed.

VICTORIA

How?

ALBERT

For the better—a thousand times better.

VICTORIA

(*Squeezing his hand impulsively*)

I'm *so* glad you think so. Look—look at this. You and me—at Kensington, when you were here before. Lord Ashley drew it. Oh, I'm so *funny*.

ALBERT

And I. So stern and upright.

VICTORIA

You are still—severe.

ALBERT

(*He is a very young man*)

Do I really impress you as severe?

VICTORIA

O-o-oh, terribly.

(*They laugh heartily.* STOCKMAR *discovers them so. Delighted, he is slipping out when* ALBERT *espies him*)

ALBERT

My Stockmar!

(*Runs to him and they embrace*)

When am I going to see you? I must talk to you. To-night, Stockmar?

STOCKMAR

The Queen has commanded a concert in your honor to-night.

ALBERT

Then when can I talk to you alone?

STOCKMAR

We will find a time.

ALBERT

But there are so many things you must advise me about; so many questions to ask you, such vital affairs to discuss with you.

STOCKMAR

(*Pleasantly*)

Will there ever be time enough?

ALBERT

Never.

STOCKMAR

If Her Majesty would consent to dismiss you now, there are a few minutes before dinner.

(*He looks at* VICTORIA.)

VICTORIA

Until to-night, Cousin Albert.

(*He bows and goes out, his arm in* STOCKMAR'S. *The* QUEEN *calls*)

Lehzen! Lehzen!

(LEHZEN *enters instantly*)

I will wear white to-night, Lehzen.

(*The governess bows and is about to depart*)

He has a *beautiful* nose and eyes, Lehzen

(LEHZEN *is delighted*)

LEHZEN

(*In going to* VICTORIA *she moves a chair out of the way*)

My darling. . . .

VICTORIA

A mouth beautifully formed.

LEHZEN

I knew when you saw him——

(*She breaks off, not wishing to force the* QUEEN'S *mood*)

White, you said?

VICTORIA

White—all white—shoes and everything.

LEHZEN

Like a bride.

VICTORIA

(*A bashful girl, blushing furiously*)

Oh, Lehzen!

(*But* LEHZEN *has gone.* VICTORIA *goes to the mantel, puts the vase in the exact center, in front of the clock. She replaces the chair the Fräulein has moved, on the exact spot* ALBERT *chose for it. Then she goes upstage and squints down the line. She moves the chair a trifle; squints down her finger to make sure it is as* ALBERT *left it*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THIRD EPISODE

Reception Room in Buckingham Palace

October 11, 1839

THIRD EPISODE

The scene is the same as that of the Second Episode.

It is the evening of October 11, 1839. The double doors on the left, which remained closed during the preceding episode except to admit the FOOTMAN, *are thrown open as the curtain rises.*

Through them may be seen a dinner table. Sitting around it are VICTORIA, ALBERT, *The* DUKE OF WELLINGTON, *The* DUCHESS OF KENT, LORD PALMERSTON, LADY GAY HAWTHORN, WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *and* VISCOUNT MELBOURNE. *The* QUEEN *rises; so do the others. The men stand back to permit the ladies to pass in front of them into the room which is the stage. The doors are closed behind the ladies, who enter in a dignified procession. The* QUEEN *sits bolt upright. The others do likewise. A dreadful ceremonial silence.*

DUCHESS

The Prince and Mr. Gladstone were quite interested in each other.

LADY GAY

(*A flapper of her time*)

They are not unlike.

(*It is evident that the type bores her. But her companions do not catch the slur in her words*)

Both *good.*

LEHZEN

Both God-fearing, orderly and conscientious.

VICTORIA

I adore order.

(*She sighs. The others sigh in sympathy*)

LEHZEN

You have known Mr. Gladstone for some time, have you not, Lady Gay?

LADY GAY

Oh, always. The Gladstones and the Hawthorns have always been neighbors. I admire Mr. Gladstone, but I prefer men with dash. If Lord Palmerston were younger!

LEHZEN

Mr. Gladstone is much older than you.

LADY GAY

Oh yes—much. He is thirty! In our part of the country we think him quite remarkable! Under-Secretary for the Colonies at twenty-six!

LEHZEN

Remarkable. Quite remarkable.

VICTORIA

(*Automatically. Her mind is with* ALBERT)

Quite remarkable.

LADY GAY

He took his seat in the House at twenty-four.

DUCHESS

Wonderful!

VICTORIA

Wonderful.

(*Her inattention becomes apparent. A dull silence. The ladies look at her, and she is looking into a dream. They fear to interrupt her meditation*)

DUCHESS

(*At length*)

I think I will have the whist table made ready.

VICTORIA

(*Aroused. Horrified*)

The whist table! Mamma!

DUCHESS

Well, why not?

VICTORIA

It isn't proper to make the whist table ready before the gentlemen come.

DUCHESS

They will be forever over their wine.

VICTORIA

There must always be the reception before whist.

DUCHESS

I do not care to wait.

VICTORIA

But you *must* wait, mamma. It is etiquette.

DUCHESS

(*She is a radical*)

Then etiquette should be changed.

VICTORIA

(*She should be shocked, but she isn't*)

I have been considering that.

LEHZEN

My dear Drina!

(*Another silence*)

DUCHESS

(*Ungraciously*)

Would you care to see the Queen's album?

LADY GAY

Oh, I should be overwhelmed by the honor.

(*She is faintly ironic, and joins the* DUCHESS *at the table.* VICTORIA *beckons the* FRÄULEIN *to her*)

VICTORIA

(*Taking the* FRÄULEIN'S *hand. In an undertone*)

Were ever such delicate mustachios, Lehzen?

LEHZEN

He is beautiful.

VICTORIA

How enchanting his slight, but very slight, whiskers!

LEHZEN

Ah, my dear, I knew, once you had set eyes upon him——

VICTORIA

(*Continuing her own thought*)

Was there ever a finer figure! Broad and powerful in the shoulders, so slender and lithe in the waist!

LEHZEN

Did you notice how he interested the table with his account of the method employed in filing State papers in Coburg?

VICTORIA

The most princely bearing in the whole world. . . .

(*Arousing herself*)

They are overlong, Lehzen.

LEHZEN

It is but a moment since we left them.

VICTORIA

Even a moment is overlong—tonight.

LEHZEN

Ah, my dear Drina, impatient.

(*She is as waggish as she can be*)

VICTORIA

Lady Gay Hawthorn is genteel.

LEHZEN

Oh very. And sprightly too.

VICTORIA

I think she will make a suitable Lady of the Bedchamber.

LEHZEN

She has good humor.

VICTORIA

I shall mention her name to Lord Melbourne. Pray ask him to step here.

LEHZEN

The nomination can wait, Drina.

VICTORIA

I do not wish to see him for that. I desire the gentlemen to join us.

LEHZEN

It is customary for the gentlemen to linger over their wine.

VICTORIA

My precious Lehzen, will you have the goodness to sound the bell?

(FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *obeys and returns to her*)

So vivacious at dinner. Did you remark his animation when he was telling Lord Melbourne the number of acres under cultivation in Coburg?

(*The* FOOTMAN *enters*)

Ask Lord Melbourne to step here.

(*He goes out*)

And so amazingly well informed! How he astonished Lord Palmerston by his knowledge of the annual output of the Manchester mills!

(VISCOUNT MELBOURNE *enters*)

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty sent for me?

(*She waves* LEHZEN *away. The* FRÄULEIN *joins the other two ladies at the table. They cease to look at the album and listen intently*)

VICTORIA

We desire the gentlemen to attend us.

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty!

(*He is astonished*)

VICTORIA

Pray, why not?

MELBOURNE

We have scarcely had time to accustom ourselves to the rare flavor of the port wine.

VICTORIA

(*Descending from the lofty manner in which she has thus far addressed* MELBOURNE)

I daresay you have all had sufficient.

MELBOURNE

The decanters are at least half full yet.

VICTORIA

(*Impatiently*)

I consider heavy drinking after dinner a horrid custom.

MELBOURNE

Nevertheless, Your Majesty, it *is* a custom.

VICTORIA

It is a custom which were better ended.

MELBOURNE

Everywhere in the civilized world gentlemen linger over their wine after dinner.

VICTORIA

I daresay.

MELBOURNE

It is a convention as fixed as the order in which the several courses are served.

VICTORIA

I am well aware of that.

MELBOURNE

Then, Your Majesty——

VICTORIA

I won't permit it, Lord Melbourne. Especially not tonight.

MELBOURNE

Pardon my presumption. But it is necessary to remind Your Majesty that it is especially important tonight that all the conventions of social custom be observed. The Prince——

VICTORIA

The Prince without doubt is impatient to join us here.

MELBOURNE

He is discussing with Mr. Gladstone——

VICTORIA

My lord, we desire the gentlemen to come to us.

(MELBOURNE *hesitates a moment, bows, and goes back to dining room*)

LADY GAY

(*Horrified. Addressing no one*)

She will make drunkennesss unfashionable!

(ALBERT *enters, followed by* MELBOURNE, WELLINGTON, PALMERSTON, *and* GLADSTONE. *The latter is a young man, mature and staid and measured. The* FOOTMAN *closes the doors behind them. The men form in line to go through the reception ritual; the three ladies come downstage*)

VICTORIA

Have you been riding today, Lord Melbourne?

MELBOURNE

I took a turn in the Park.

VICTORIA

It was a fine day.

MELBOURNE

Oh, a very fine day.

VICTORIA

A bit fresh as twilight approached.

MELBOURNE

It *was* somewhat sharp.

(*A pause*)

Has Your Majesty been riding today?

VICTORIA

(*With animation*)

Oh, yes, a very long ride with Prince Albert.

MELBOURNE

I hope the Prince was provided with a good mount.

VICTORIA

Oh, a very good mount.

(MELBOURNE *stands a moment uncomfortably. The* QUEEN *smiles, inclines her head, and he passes on.* WELLINGTON *comes next*)

Has Your Grace been riding today?

WELLINGTON

No, ma'am, I have not.

VICTORIA

It was a fine day for riding.

WELLINGTON

Yes, ma'am, a very fine day.

VICTORIA

It was somewhat damp, though.

WELLINGTON

It *was* rather damp, ma'am.

VICTORIA

The Duchess is travelling on the Continent, I believe?

WELLINGTON

She's in Vienna, now.

VICTORIA

The Duchess rides, does she not?

WELLINGTON

She does ride sometimes, ma'am.

VICTORIA

Has she a nice horse?

WELLINGTON

A thoroughbred. By Waterdale out of Hester.

VICTORIA

(*Shocked*)

My lord!

WELLINGTON

Her mare is carrying a colt now, by Spitfire.

VICTORIA

My lord, you forget yourself.

(*She is drawn up to her full indignant height. The* DUKE *grows surly. He growls*)

WELLINGTON

Well, ma'am, you asked.

(*She turns from him pointedly to* GLADSTONE. WELLINGTON *angrily stamps over to the* DUCHESS)

Damme, what's the harm in saying a horse was born and had a sire and a dam and is going to have a colt? They don't come from heaven like angels.

VICTORIA

Do *you* ride, Mr. Gladstone?

GLADSTONE

Very seldom, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Have you been riding today?

GLADSTONE

Not today, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

It was a fine day for riding.

GLADSTONE

A very fine day.

VICTORIA

Does Mrs. Gladstone ride?

GLADSTONE

About as often as I do, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Did Mrs. Gladstone ride today?

GLADSTONE

I believe not.

(*A pause*)

Has Your Majesty been riding today?

VICTORIA

Oh yes. A very long ride with Prince Albert.

GLADSTONE

Has Your Majesty got a nice horse?

VICTORIA

Oh, a very nice horse.

(*She smiles, inclines her head, and he is free to retreat. It is now* PALMERSTON'S *turn*)

Have you been riding today, Lord Palmerston?

PALMERSTON

I have been occupied in the Committee on Indian Affairs today.

VICTORIA

You are interested in Eastern questions, my lord?

PALMERSTON

Every man in public life must be. England's future lies in the East.

ALBERT

(*Who throughout this scene has been conversing with* FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *nearby*)

England's future will lie in England.

PALMERSTON

Her glory, perhaps. But her commercial future——

ALBERT

Even her commercial future lies at home. In that respect she is unlike Germany. My country, being the passage to the East, will control the routes and therefore the commerce of the East.

PALMERSTON

There may be other routes.

ALBERT

Long and perilous.

PALMERSTON

Not for us. Englishmen have ever found the seas safe and sure. We have made them so.

ALBERT

But all the way around Africa——

PALMERSTON

Oh, we shall not always have to sail around Africa to reach the Orient by water.

ALBERT

How else will you arrive?

VICTORIA

You were saying you did not ride today, Lord Palmerston?

PALMERSTON

(*To* ALBERT)

Narrow necks of land may be cut. And will be.

VICTORIA

You should have taken a canter on such a fine day.

(ALBERT *gives up*)

You do ride, don't you?

ALBERT

(*Sotto voce to* FRÄULEIN LEHZEN)

I do not trust that noble lord.

(VICTORIA *has followed his every movement with her eyes. But a ritual is a ritual, and she goes through with it pluckily—and solemnly*)

PALMERSTON

I seldom ride anything except the perilous political waves of Your Majesty's government.

VICTORIA

How you twist things! I was referring to horseback riding.

PALMERSTON

I surmised as much.

VICTORIA

Then pray, sir, why did you not answer my question?

PALMERSTON

(*With a sweeping bow, the irony of which entirely escapes his sovereign*)

Because the Queen does not require my poor responses in order to be informed.

VICTORIA

Law, sir, your courtliness is more French than English.

PALMERSTON

And yet no one in Your Majesty's realm is more English than I.

VICTORIA

There are those who will not agree with you.

PALMERSTON

I am the very type of Englishman.

VICTORIA

I should like to believe it so—for the sake of my people.

PALMERSTON

Your Majesty is too gracious.

VICTORIA

But you are above the average—far, far above. Few have risen so high as you.

PALMERSTON

In that respect I am, perhaps, exceptional. But I assure Your Majesty that in all else I am a thorough Englishman.

VICTORIA

(*Playfully*)

What is a thorough Englishman, my lord?

PALMERSTON

One who spends his 'twenties resisting temptation and the rest of his life regretting it.

VICTORIA

(*Shocked*)

My lord!

(*She is more than shocked. But the rest of the company is pleased with the epigram. They laugh,* LADY GAY *somewhat too merrily. Even* GLADSTONE *smiles, and* ALBERT *does likewise, until he sees the*

QUEEN'S *expression—then the smile vanishes*)

DUCHESS

You have wit, my lord.

LADY GAY

Lord Palmerston is the greatest epigrammatist in England.

PALMERSTON

You flatter me, Lady Gay. But I happen to know one who is unrivalled.

DUCHESS

Who?

WELLINGTON

What's his name?

PALMERSTON

It's a woman.

LADY GAY

A woman!

MELBOURNE

Who is she?

LEHZEN

An Englishwoman?

(PALMERSTON *nods*)

DUCHESS

Tell us her name?

LADY GAY

Oh do, Lord Palmerston.

WELLINGTON

Out with it.

GLADSTONE

I had thought English wit had gone into a decline since the great Eighteenth Century.

PALMERSTON

Then you have never heard of Lady Flora Hastings.

(*General laughter*)

VICTORIA

Oh, you *have* revealed her name.

MELBOURNE

Trapped.

WELLINGTON

You're not so adroit as you're reputed to be.

LADY GAY

Is she so clever?

GLADSTONE

Lady Flora Hastings is quite bright.

DUCHESS

I have never found her witty.

PALMERSTON

Oh, then Your Grace has not heard what she said to the old Duke of Leicester last week.

VICTORIA

What did she say?

LADY GAY

Yes, what, Lord Palmerston?

PALMERSTON

The Duke asked Lady Flora whether she would prefer Lord Burton or Sir Oliver Randall as a husband, and she responded, "I would prefer to be married to Lord Burton, but in the first year to elope with Sir Oliver."

(*The company laughs heartily. The* QUEEN'S *lips make a thin line, and her voice cuts through the merriment like an electric chisel*)

VICTORIA

We are not amused.

(*A dull, dead silence. The transformation is so sharp that the laughter remains on the faces of some of the company*)

DUCHESS

(*Finally*)

It is sultry tonight.

(*Her effort at bringing life back into the party fails. The silence continues for another oppressive moment*)

I think I will have the whist tables made ready.

(*A general sigh of relief, followed by chatter*)

MELBOURNE

I am a poor player.

LADY GAY

It is a fascinating game—whist. So dashing.

LEHZEN

We play it differently in Germany.

GLADSTONE

One can pass a pleasant hour over whist.

WELLINGTON

Who will be my partner?

PALMERSTON

In all the world there is none worthy of such an honor. To be the partner at whist of the great

Duke of Wellington, the victor of Waterloo, is renown beyond dreams of renown; it ensures immortality.

WELLINGTON

Look here, Palmerston, tone your pleasantries——

VICTORIA

The man who has saved Europe cannot be touched by ridicule.

(*Again the oppressive silence*)

DUCHESS

(*She has rung; the* FOOTMAN *opens the rear doors*)

The tables are ready.

(*They go out.* FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *precedes* ALBERT *and closes the doors behind her as he, uncertain what to do, has taken a step towards them. He comes slowly downstage to where* VICTORIA *sits, watching him out of the corners of her eyes as she arranges her flounces. She sits expectantly. As he reaches her, he hesitates, goes to the windows and opens one slightly*)

ALBERT

It is *sehr schön* tonight.

VICTORIA

As gentle as spring.

ALBERT

It would be most pleasant in the garden.

VICTORIA

Oh, it would be *heavenly!*

ALBERT

If we should take a promenade?

VICTORIA

I would *love* to.

ALBERT

(*With a gesture exaggerated, as playful as it is possible for him to be*)

Then come.

VICTORIA

Do you think it would be quite proper?

ALBERT

Oh, no. I beg your pardon.

(*A pause*)

VICTORIA

Before you came I wondered what you were like, Cousin Albert.

ALBERT

Am I—have I—disappointed you?

VICTORIA

Not at all.

(*Feeling this insufficient*)

Not at *all.*

(*A pause*)

It looks as though Mamma had plotted to leave us alone together.

(*A nervous laugh*)

ALBERT

Shall I call them back?

VICTORIA

(*Amused at his obtuseness and not pleased that he doesn't seize the opportunity she offers*)

I am *very* glad we are alone together, for I think we ought to try to become *well* acquainted with each other.

ALBERT

Ah, that would be most agreeable.

(*Again a pause*)

VICTORIA

(*Coyly*)

Perhaps I, too, connived at getting rid of our guests.

ALBERT

You wanted to be alone with me!

VICTORIA

(*She thinks that now he is going to do it. A bit too eagerly*)

Yes—oh yes.

(*He says nothing*)

Yes.

ALBERT

(*Bowing from the hips*)

Gracious Cousin.

VICTORIA

(*Irritated*)

That was the—er—the object of your visit.

(*She is taken aback by her own boldness*)

ALBERT

I concurred heartily in the plan, for I think members of the same family—especially a ruling family—should learn to know each other.

VICTORIA

(*A click of impatience*)

Tsct!

ALBERT

Pardon?

VICTORIA

Nothing.

(*She reaches up to pat her hair, and her handkerchief falls from her lap to the floor. He picks it up, and impetuously kisses the hand that receives it. Her other hand springs to touch his bowed head, but she restrains it. Weakly*)

Thank you.

(*A moment he looks into her eyes. She flutters breathlessly. He turns sharply to the mantel, and aligns the ornaments. She follows him*)

I am *so* glad you came to England.

ALBERT

Even when you recall *why* I was invited to England?

VICTORIA

(*Feebly*)

Even then.

ALBERT

(*Bracing himself and speaking with stiff formality*)

It would confer the greatest honor upon me if you would consent to what STOCKMAR—I mean, our ministers, desire.

(*Her head droops, her hands fold in front of her*)

VICTORIA

It would make me *too happy.*

(*He is uncomfortable, wants to embrace her, is not sure it is the proper thing to do. Her head still drooping, she peeks up at him, but he does not see. She is in a completely receptive position*)

ALBERT

Victoria, I—I——

VICTORIA

Yes, Albert?

ALBERT

I—I——

(*He gives up, and seeks refuge at the piano, striking a tentative and tinkly chord or two, and then, looking bravely at her as he is ironically reënforced by that foe of German monarchs who wrote the song, he sings—"Du Bist wie eine Blume." In the midst of the song* VICTORIA, *who has come to his side and has been listening enraptured and trying to hum with him, puts her hand upon his shoulder. He springs up and embraces her, murmuring*)

My little English mayflower!

VICTORIA

(*Her arms go round him*)

Oh, Albert, I am *quite unworthy* of you.

ALBERT

I will be very happy *das Leben mit dir zu zubringen.*

VICTORIA

Oh, Albert, before I saw you, the very idea of marrying was odious to me, and now I am *too happy.*

(*They kiss.* FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *enters. They separate, but she has seen and is overjoyed*)

LEHZEN

Lord Palmerston is chaffing the Duke again. You had better make peace. Drina.

VICTORIA

Yes—yes. Oh, no—I could not reprimand anybody now. Albert, my love, will you reprimand Lord Palmerston? I want to see Lord Melbourne.

(*They embrace again, and he follows* FRÄULEIN LEHZEN *out.* VICTORIA *blows kisses at the closed door.* MELBOURNE *enters. She goes toward him impulsively, almost runs*)

Oh, Lord Melbourne, the most *enchanting* thing has happened!

MELBOURNE

Your Majesty?

VICTORIA

He—Albert—I—we——

MELBOURNE

(*Tenderly*)

Yes?

VICTORIA

We—we—Albert is the most—we lo——

(*She cannot pour forth her ecstasy. She stops. A pause*)

MELBOURNE

You and the Prince?

VICTORIA

We—I—he—The weather is quite damp for this season of the year.

MELBOURNE

Quite.

VICTORIA

I have recently had a letter from Uncle Leopold of Belgium.

MELBOURNE

I trust he is well.

VICTORIA

Quite.

(*Another pause.* VICTORIA *is extremely elated, nervous, excited. Finally she blurts out*)

I have got well through this with Albert.

MELBOURNE

(*Who has known all along what she wanted to tell him*)

Oh! You have!

INTERMISSION

FOURTH EPISODE

Reception Room in Buckingham Palace

January, 1854

FOURTH EPISODE

It is January, 1854.

The room is the same as in the preceding episode —at least, the walls and woodwork are the same; but even the Georgian chimney piece and the Empire sofa cannot hold their own against the full weight of Victorian adornment. Used now as the royal office, the chamber is dominated by two large and ugly walnut writing tables, piled with documents in prim order. There are heavy upholstered chairs, mathematically arranged. The mantel is covered with a dark lambrequin, and huge red tassels on twisted rope cords loop back the ponderous draperies. Strangest of all, a vast wardrobe of rosewood or walnut stands with closed doors against the wall, quite overbalancing a delicate little relic of the Brothers Adam on the opposite side. But a fire burns brightly on the hearth, and mitigates the ponderous stolidity of the scene.

The stage is empty as the curtain rises, but the FOOTMAN, *grown a trifle portly and pompous, almost immediately ushers in* LORD PALMERSTON, *now nearly seventy, but still straight, fiery and direct, though conspicuously dyed.*

FOOTMAN

I will inform Her Majesty that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs craves an audience.

PALMERSTON

Inform His Highness also.

(*The* FOOTMAN *bows and departs, rear.* PALMERSTON *gazes about the room, shrugs. He goes to the desks, is offended by the orderliness there, touches the documents contemptuously, musses them up, chuckles and rearranges them.* LADY GAY HAWTHORN—*become Victorian also—enters*)

LADY GAY

Good morning, my lord.

PALMERSTON

Ah, Lady Gay. How do you find life in the royal enclosure today?

LADY GAY

It never varies, my lord.

PALMERSTON

Tied hand and foot to the flaming chariot, eh?

LADY GAY

Flaming is scarcely the word to describe this court.

(*They laugh.* LADY GAY *becomes grave to deliver her message*)

Their Majesties, my lord, are occupied with the royal children, as is their wont. At ten o'clock, as is their custom, their Majesties will enter their bureau. All audiences must be after that hour. It now lacks five minutes of ten o'clock. Furthermore, Her Majesty demands to know on whose responsibility Lord Palmerston presumes to arrive at the Palace without having been summoned.

PALMERSTON

(*Hotly*)

On *my* responsibility.

LADY GAY

There! My message is delivered.

(*She laughs, he laughs*)

PALMERSTON

Occupied with the royal children, eh?

LADY GAY

She calls them her little love pledges.

PALMERSTON

Shades of St. Valentine! What does he call them? Whatever she tells him to, I suppose.

LADY GAY

No. The Prince Consort is a *very* strong character.

PALMERSTON

Doubtless.

LADY GAY

Thought he *does* resemble a foreign tenor.

PALMERSTON

(*Shrugs*)

The Prince is a foreigner who suffers from having no vices.

LADY GAY

He suffers from something else, besides.

PALMERSTON

Stockmar?

(*She nods*)

LADY GAY

What can you expect? His heart is in Germany. He dreams always of Germany—a Germany unified under Prussian leadership.

PALMERSTON

Prussia is the adolescent among the nations. Gauche and raucous and pimpled. A clumsy Machiavelli.

LADY GAY

Stockmar is always near him.

PALMERSTON

(*Heatedly*)

Yes, and it is Stockmar who has given him the idea that as Prince Consort he, through the Queen, should dominate the Government. Well, we'll see about that. The British Government controlled by a foreigner whose sole interest is in Germany and the future greatness of Prussia! We'll see about that. We'll see about that.

(*He strides about, much agitated. He is showing his age*)

LADY GAY

There's no danger, because the Queen——

PALMERSTON

They are trying to get rid of me—she, as well as her German consort and god, and his mentor. But the choice lies with me, not with them. It has been made already.

LADY GAY

I'm sure the Queen has no desire——

PALMERSTON

Oh, yes, she has. A very strong desire to get rid of me. Because I dare to disagree with her beloved. But I can do as I wish, because the British people are fond of me.

LADY GAY

They are fond of the Prince, too.

PALMERSTON

In a way.

LADY GAY

Since the magnificent success of the Great Exhibition, his popularity surpasses even that of Her Majesty.

PALMERSTON

But he isn't one of them. He *is* a foreigner to them.

LADY GAY

However that may be, to the Queen he is everything.

(*The* ROYAL PAIR *enter. They are about thirty-five years old. They come in holding hands and smiling at each other, but as soon as they espy* PALMERSTON *their faces freeze.* ALBERT *nods curtly and, seating himself at his table, becomes immersed in his documents.* VICTORIA *is unable to conceal her hostility so well.* LADY GAY *departs*)

VICTORIA

(*Acknowledging his bow*)

My lord.

(*Bristling*)

We do not grant audiences before ten o'clock in the morning

PALMERSTON

(*With great respect*)

Lady Gay Hawthorn has reminded me of my error.

VICTORIA

A member of our—my—Government should *know* such things.

PALMERSTON

I did, but an important affair of State——

VICTORIA

The will of the sovereign transcends all other affairs of State.

PALMERSTON

That is a view which the English people would scarcely concur in.

(*Pointedly*)

It is cherished, I believe, in Prussia.

(ALBERT *glances at him, frowns and resumes his work*)

VICTORIA

Buckingham Palace is not a public house that anyone may enter as the whim directs.

PALMERSTON

Her Majesty will perhaps grant that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has privileges not granted to the majority of her subjects.

VICTORIA

To the Sovereign there are no privileged persons among her subjects.

PALMERSTON

(*Giving up*)

I am come to inform Your Majesty that our relations with Russia are strained.

VICTORIA

With Russia!

(*Palmerston bows*)

Oh, it mustn't be.

PALMERSTON

I fear, ma'am, that it is.

VICTORIA

It can't be.

ALBERT

Why not, my love?

VICTORIA

I was christened Alexandrina Victoria Alexandrina after the Czar Alexander of Russia!

PALMERSTON

Nevertheless, our relations with Russia are critical.

VICTORIA

Why, sir, have I not been informed of the state of affairs *before* our relations with Russia became critical?

PALMERSTON

I am come to beg your Majesty to indite an amicable letter to His Majesty of France. We shall require his aid.

VICTORIA

(*Tartly*)

Such a request should come from Lord Aberdeen, my Prime Minister. Why have he and you not made me completely cognizant of all the details of the negotiations *as* they occurred?

PALMERSTON

They have been extremely delicate.

VICTORIA

No matter how delicate, each step should have been submitted to us—to me *before* it was taken.

PALMERSTON

(*With great deference, but firmly*)
The affairs of Government, Your Majesty, are the affair of the Government.

(*That is not* STOCKMAR'S *view, not* ALBERT'S)

VICTORIA

As a result of your management of our affairs, England faces disaster.

PALMERSTON

England is strong enough to brave consequences.

VICTORIA

You have deliberately kept me uninformed of the negotiations with Russia.

PALMERSTON

The necessities of diplomacy——

VICTORIA

The Queen of England wil not submit to such trickery.

(*The word bites*)

PALMERSTON

Am I to understand that I no longer enjoy Your Majesty's confidence?

(*She draws herself up and nods*)

Then—I am perforce compelled to resign as a member of Your Majesty's Government.

(*He waits, but she says nothing. He bows and goes out.* ALBERT *has long since stopped trying to conceal his attention to the conversation. As soon as the door closes behind* PALMERSTON, *he shows agitation*)

ALBERT

My beloved——

VICTORIA

A good riddance.

ALBERT

You should never have done such a thing.

VICTORIA

I am *most* pleased with the outcome.

ALBERT

But it is indiscreet.

VICTORIA

The Sovereign is above indiscretion.

ALBERT

Ill-advised.

VICTORIA

Not at all, not at all.

ALBERT

It may cause the fall of Lord Aberdeen's Government.

VICTORIA

If Lord Aberdeen's Government is so weak——

ALBERT

But this Palmerston is highly regarded in the House of Commons, and among the populace he is greatly loved.

VICTORIA

So are we, my love.

ALBERT

But to accept the resignation of a minister of State without careful consideration!

VICTORIA

He wishes to treat me like a woman, but I will show him that I am Queen of England.

ALBERT

The Queen, above all others, should do nothing without due deliberation and the proper formalities.

VICTORIA

Well, it is done now, dearest.

ALBERT

It is certain to cause difficulties.

VICTORIA

Undoubtedly.

ALBERT

Summon him back, my love.

VICTORIA

Oh, I could *never* do *that*.

ALBERT

A kind word from you, and he would withdraw his resignation.

VICTORIA

But I don't wish him to withdraw his resignation, my heart.

ALBERT

I am much disturbed.

VICTORIA

It is done now.

ALBERT

It is so ill-considered—so hastily done.

VICTORIA

Are you not taking this too seriously, my darling?

ALBERT

It is serious. *Sehr, sehr.*

VICTORIA

What would you have me do?

ALBERT

Send for him.

VICTORIA

I cannot consent to humiliate myself.

ALBERT

There is no humiliation in doing what is best for the country.

VICTORIA

It is best for the country that the Sovereign shall be firm. And it is not best for the country to have such a one in office.

ALBERT

He is very powerful.

VICTORIA

So are we!

ALBERT

But he, being out of office, will have the public sympathy. They will feel you have been the aggressor, my heart.

VICTORIA

The Sovereign is above caring what the populace thinks so long as she knows she is performing her duty.

ALBERT

But you will be blamed, my love.

VICTORIA

We are above both popularity and blame.

ALBERT

If there is a Government crisis at this moment when our relations with Russia are critical, it might precipitate a war that could be prevented.

VICTORIA

(*Thoroughly frightened*)

Oh!

(*They gaze at each other, she horrified. But as she looks at him her expression*

changes, and all the horror has gone from her voice when she speaks again; there is grave concern in it)

Oh, my darling!

ALBERT

(*Startled*)

Was ist?

VICTORIA

There's a—a grey hair in your beard!

(*His hand instinctively flies to his chin*)

Not there, dearest. To the right. Here. Not one —three!

ALBERT

My heart, the moment is serious. We cannot think of hair.

VICTORIA

Three grey hairs in your beard, my precious, is more serious than all else in the world. Still, we are thirty-five. . . . But I wish—Dearest.

ALBERT

Eh?

VICTORIA

See if I have any grey hairs.

ALBERT

Liebes Fräuchen!

(*She amuses him*)

VICTORIA

Please look.

(*She bends her head; he regards it closely*)

ALBERT

Not one, my heart.

VICTORIA

Oh, I wish there were three grey hairs. You must not outstrip me. I dream of us growing old together, quietly, holding hands, and loving each other more and more all the time, if it were possible to love more than we do now. . . .

(*She sighs sentimentally*)

ALBERT

Liebschen, you must make a memorandum of your tilt with Lord Palmerston.

VICTORIA

(*Still in her sentimental mood*)

When I am with *you,* I cannot *bear* to bother my head with anything so dull as politics.

(*He touches her cheek fondly, which throws her into ecstasy*)

ALBERT

(*Gently*)

The duty of a sovereign, my love.

(ALBERT, *when* VICTORIA *is seated at her table, goes to the great wardrobe and opens the doors, disclosing it to be an improvised filing cabinet most neatly and ingeniously pigeonholed and labelled—doubtless a thrifty invention of his own—and extracting a document from compartment R, returns to his table and studies it.* VICTORIA, *meanwhile, writes a line, scratches it out, tries again with no better success, bites her penholder.*)

VICTORIA

(*In a wee voice*)

Albert.

ALBERT

Eh?

VICTORIA

How shall I write it?

ALBERT

Exactly as it happened.

VICTORIA

I can never remember *details*.

ALBERT

(*Resigned—dictates. She writes rapidly*)

"Lord Palmerston insinuated himself into the royal bureau before the hour when Her Majesty grants audience. When Her Majesty reproached him for the intrusion, he used as an excuse that the state of the relations between England and Russia were critical. Her Majesty demanded to know why she had been kept in ignorance of the state of affairs, and why she was not consulted about every step before it was taken. Lord Palmerston——"

(*She looks up, leans over and brushes his coat collar. He stiffens and she returns to her task*)

"Lord Palmerston evaded."

VICTORIA

Dearest, is there an *i* in evaded?

ALBERT

No. E-v-a-d-e-d. "Lord Palmerston evaded——"

VICTORIA

(*Writing*)

a-d-e-d.

ALBERT

"Her Majesty reproved him. Whereupon the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, seeing that he had

forfeited his Sovereign's confidence, resigned. The Queen accepted his resignation." Date it.

VICTORIA

1-8-5-3. No. 4. I always do that in January—forget that another year has passed. What date is it? January——

(*She consults a calendar and writes the date*)

There! Where should I file it?

ALBERT

Third from the left—"Foreign Office."

(*She puts the folded document in the pigeonhole indicated*)

Have you examined the papers relative to the Spanish misunderstanding?

VICTORIA

Yes.

ALBERT

You had better write the Emperor Napoleon III the stand you intend to take in the matter.

VICTORIA

Yes.

(*He returns to his own papers. After a moment*)

What stand shall I take? I mean what stand do you think it *advisable* to take?

ALBERT

Why, just tell him——

VICTORIA

I wonder if there are any grey hairs in your *head.*

(*She rises to find out, holding his face against her as she rummages through the hair and then smooths it out again*)

No—none.

ALBERT

(*Released, he is able to speak again*)

Dearest, really!

VICTORIA

It just occurred to me that maybe——

ALBERT

(*Sternly*)

Let's get on with our labors.

(*A few moments during which he is busy reading a document and making notes. She tries to write the letter to Napoleon, but is stumped and bites her penholder, her finger nails. . . . She glances at him furtively the while*)

VICTORIA

(*In a wee voice*)

Albert.

ALBERT

Yes, my heart.

VICTORIA

There is something I have wished to speak to you about for some time.

ALBERT

What is it, my love?

VICTORIA

It's about Bertie. I am *very* concerned about him.

ALBERT

What has he done?

VICTORIA

He shows no aptitude in his books.

ALBERT

(*Laying aside his papers*)

I have noticed that too.

VICTORIA

I am *much* distressed.

ALBERT

He is still a mere boy.

VICTORIA

But he is also the Prince of Wales.

ALBERT

(*Indulgently*)

Yes, but a boy first. A vigorous, healthy boy, too.

VICTORIA

You are *so* patient and painstaking with him—you even supervise his games.

ALBERT

That is part of the duty of a father.

VICTORIA

I pray *always most* fervently that Bertie will grow up to resemble his dearest father in *every, every* respect, both in body and mind.

ALBERT

(*Pleased but embarrassed*)

Oh, my darling.

VICTORIA

But he seems wilful and perverse and selfish——

ALBERT

A little wilful, perhaps.

VICTORIA

Whereas you are the very *embodiment* of abnegation.

ALBERT

Really, Victoria, you must not say such things. You must learn to see me without prejudice.

VICTORIA

Wasn't it the most unselfish abnegation when you gave up double chess after dinner in order to spend the evenings spinning counters and rings with me? Oh, it *is such fun.*

ALBERT

If we were to invite scientists and men of letters to the Palace, it would benefit Bertie greatly to come in contact with them.

VICTORIA

I'm sure Bertie has the opportunity to meet the *very best* people.

ALBERT

Yes, but I mean distinguished men.

VICTORIA

Statesmen are certainly distinguished.

ALBERT

They are prominent, but they are not creative. They do not advance knowledge.

VICTORIA

What should we do without them?

ALBERT

They are quite necessary—quite. But Bertie could profit from encountering other kinds of people—people who are advancing knowledge and art.

VICTORIA

Art is so frequently improper, though, fortunately, not so improper in England as elsewhere.

ALBERT

If Bertie could meet philosophers and scientists——

VICTORIA

But, dearest, he meets all the *best* people, and they are well known, too.

ALBERT

They are not necessarily anything in themselves. I was thinking that we might invite Mr. Darwin. I have read some papers of his in a scientific periodical.

VICTORIA

Oh, he has the most *horrid* and *distasteful* ideas. Lord Aberdeen essayed to explain them to me, but I found them so sickening that I would not allow him to continue.

ALBERT

If you had permitted him to explain Mr. Darwin's theory in full——

VICTORIA

It savored of sacrilege.

ALBERT

Science is not pretty, my dearest, but it is the only sane revolutionary force in the world.

VICTORIA

(*Covering her ears*)

I can't *abide* that *odious* word.

ALBERT

Why is it odious?

VICTORIA

It means violence.

ALBERT

Not in science, my heart.

VICTORIA

Well, anyway, it signifies change, and I abominate change.

(*But she—her manner changes and her voice changes also*)

I want us to stay just as we are—you and I and our little love pledges, forever and ever. . . .

ALBERT

Even Bertie?

VICTORIA

We must do *something* about him.

ALBERT

Suppose we draw up a memorandum?

VICTORIA

(*Delighted, not only with the idea as a solution, but with the genius that produced the idea*)

That's it—that's *exactly* what he needs. What shall we say?

ALBERT

Let me think. . . .

VICTORIA

I'll write and you dictate.

ALBERT

"Life is composed of duties, and in the due, punctual and cheerful performance of them the true Christian, true soldier and true gentleman is recognized."

VICTORIA

How *nobly* you phrase it, my love!

ALBERT

It might be well to remind his tutors of their responsibility.

VICTORIA

We'll write a memorandum for them, also.

ALBERT

(*Dictating*)

"For the guidance of the gentlemen appointed to attend on the Prince of Wales." Mark it "confidential," my love.

VICTORIA

Let us say first of all that the gentlemen should *always* bear in mind that the *great object* in the education of the Prince is that he shall become a benevolent sovereign, beloved of all the world as his father is.

(*She has picked up the framed likeness of* ALBERT *which stands on her table and gazes at it adoringly. A slight murmur in the distance which has been evident for some time now becomes the angry yell of a mob that breaks into a song, muffled by distance and the closed windows*)

What is that?

ALBERT

A great many voices.

VICTORIA

Singing.

ALBERT

But shrilly.

VICTORIA

(*Rising to go to the bell-rope*)

What celebration can it be?

(STOCKMAR *enters, excited, perturbed. His hair is disordered*)

ALBERT

Stockmar!

STOCKMAR

Pardon my informality——

VICTORIA

You are pale. Something has happened!

STOCKMAR

Palmerston has resigned!

VICTORIA

(*Pleased with herself*)

On my demand.

STOCKMAR

The people are enraged.

VICTORIA

(*Still not disturbed*)

Why should they be?

STOCKMAR

It was announced in the city. The manifesto read: "The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has been compelled to relinquish his place in the Government of Lord Aberdeen on the demand of Her Majesty and Her Majesty's foreign Consort."

VICTORIA

(*Furious*)

The—the—"Foreign Consort"!—this is more trickery. I will not submit——

STOCKMAR

They are not angered at Your Majesty.

ALBERT

At me?

STOCKMAR

They accuse you of being an enemy of England, of favoring Russia in the interest of Germany.

VICTORIA

They dare!

ALBERT

How can they!

STOCKMAR

To the British people you are always a foreigner, my son.

VICTORIA

Oh, the ingrates! He who gave them the beautiful Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition! He who slaves early and late in their interest and has grey hair in his beard at thirty-five! He, the husband of the Queen of England and the father of the Prince of Wales, their future sovereign! He an enemy of England! He favoring Russia against England! He a foreigner!

ALBERT

(*In complete control of himself*)

What is that song they are singing?

STOCKMAR

Some improvisation.

(VICTORIA *throws up a window to shake her fist at the mob, and the words "little Al" are shouted. She bangs the window down again*)

VICTORIA

I will not endure it. I myself will go out.

STOCKMAR

Your Majesty——

ALBERT

Drina!

VICTORIA

Please do not detain me, my love. I mean to tell them what the Queen thinks of her subjects. They shall beg your pardon on their knees.

ALBERT

My love, you must not.

VICTORIA

It is I who am being insulted.

ALBERT

My heart, I implore you.

VICTORIA

Let me go, Albert, let me go.

(*She breaks free of his embrace and rushes for the door right. Before she reaches it, it opens and* LADY GAY, *tremulous, breathless, pale, enters. She carries a torn and*

crumpled bunch of leaflets, but observing the QUEEN'S *agitation and surmising the cause of it, she hurriedly puts them behind her)*

LADY GAY

You've heard?

VICTORIA

Let me pass, Gay.

ALBERT

What are they singing?

LADY GAY

Oh, a terrible thing.

VICTORIA

Kindly step aside.

(*Her voice is shrill*)

ALBERT

What is the song?

(*He hopes to divert* VICTORIA)

VICTORIA

Kindly step aside.

(*She shoves* LADY GAY, *who had no intention of blocking the way, but being frightened and dazed had merely been unable to*

know what was demanded of her. As VICTORIA *pushes her, the leaflets flutter to the floor. They all stand and look at them, no one having the courage to pick them up*)

ALBERT

(*Huskily*)

The song?

(LADY GAY *nods. A long silence*)

What are the words, Stockmar?

(STOCKMAR *picks up a leaflet, glances at it, then at* ALBERT *in distress. The two men regard each other fixedly*)

VICTORIA

Read it, Stockmar.

(*Her fury has resolved into a cold anger not unmixed with tremulousness.* STOCKMAR *continues to regard* ALBERT, *who nods*)

STOCKMAR

"The Turkish War both near and far,
Has played the very deuce, then,
And little Al, the royal pal,——

VICTORIA

Oh! The——

(ALBERT *takes her hand and thus silences her. She nods again to* STOCKMAR)

STOCKMAR

"They say has turned a Russian;
Old Aberdeen, as may be seen,
Looks woeful pale and yellow,
And old John Bull has his belly full
Of dirty Russian tallow.

VICTORIA

Oh, the unspeakable vulgarity!

(ALBERT'S *arm goes round her waist*)

ALBERT

Go on, Baron.

STOCKMAR

"We'll send him home and make him groan,
Oh, Al! You've played the deuce then,
The German lad has acted sad,
And turned tail with the Russians.

VICTORIA

(*Breaking away from* ALBERT)

The guard—order out the guard. Have them shot —every one of them—traitors—traitors——

ALBERT

Sh—sh.

VICTORIA

It is lese majesty. They shall be shot—every last one of them.

ALBERT

My dearest heart, let us hear it all.

(*He nods to* STOCKMAR)

STOCKMAR

"Last Monday night all in a fright,
Al out of bed did tumble,
The German lad was raving mad,
How he did groan and grumble!
He cried to Vic, 'I've cut my stick;
To St. Petersburg go right slap!'
When Vic, 'tis said, jumped out of bed,
And wopped him with her nightcap."

(*Silence. They gaze at the leaflets, then at each other. Finally* VICTORIA *and* ALBERT *look at each other. He is more sorrowful than angry*)

VICTORIA

(*Grinding the leaflets into the floor under her heels*)

Beasts, ingrates, traducers, vile menials! They shall suffer for this. Palmerston shall suffer. He the most of all—he is the most dastardly betrayer the world has ever known—Judas—Judas—the greatest

slanderer that ever lived. But he will find out. As sure as I am Queen of England, I will have revenge on him. Palmerston shall crawl before us, crawl and beg and kiss the ground. He and his mercenaries. England, too, all the people of England, of the whole world—they shall kneel before us and implore our forgiveness. Every tongue that uttered those words shall be cut out. *Cut out,* I say—I, the Queen of England! And Palmerston, I'll—I'll——

(*Her imagination is not equal to her fury. She flies across the room and jerks the bell-rope wildly*)

I'll show them who is the traitor. And they shall learn how traitors can suffer. The Queen of England is not insulted with impunity.

(*The* FOOTMAN *enters*)

Order out the guard. Command it to disperse that yelling mob at all costs, at all hazards, in any manner necessary, violence if need be.

(*He waits*)

Make haste.

(*He goes.* ALBERT *makes a gesture to detain him, but* STOCKMAR *glances at him meaningly and goes out with the* FOOTMAN. LADY GAY *edges out after them*)

They will see—they will see—On the honor of a Queen, I swear——

ALBERT

Be calm, my darling.

VICTORIA

Calm! When those howling dogs are yelping their vile filth? Calm! You can ask that!

ALBERT

For my sake, dearest. It is not easy for either of us.

(She looks at him and sees that his quietude is a thin cover for great distress. Suddenly her rage is drowned in tears. She stumbles into his arms)

My dearest heart, misunderstood, maligned, traduced, my precious, precious love.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

FIFTH EPISODE

Bedroom of the Prince Consort, Buckingham Palace

December 13, 1861

FIFTH EPISODE

It is December 13th, 1861.

The scene is an angle in Albert's bedchamber. In the shorter wall forming the angle, to the right of the audience, a fire burns under a mantel which is burdened with a tasseled lambrequin, a black marble clock topped with a bronze statuette of Hamlet, and heavily ornate girandoles. Facing out from the larger wall, in the centre of the stage, ALBERT *lies, propped up a little with pillows in his ponderous four-post bed, his hair carefully ordered. The heavy canopies are looped back, and between him and the fire, close to his side,* VICTORIA *sits in a strange, puffily upholstered high-backed armchair, reading aloud from the works of Sir Walter Scott. On the other side of the bed is nothing but a narrow walnut commode, with a marble top, on which stand a water pitcher, glasses, and bottles of medicine.*

VICTORIA

(*In a monotone*)

" 'Child of my sorrow,' he said, 'well should'st thou be called Benoni instead of Rebecca! Why should'st thy death bring down my grey hairs to the grave——?' "

(*She glances at* ALBERT, *and loses her place*)

" 'Child of my sorrow,' he said."—No—I read that. Oh, yes, here's the place. " 'To the grave till in the bitterness of my heart, I——' "

(*He stirs. She feels his head, and rearranges his pillows*)

Are you in pain, my love?

ALBERT

Um—um!

(*She interprets that as a negative because his head moves from side to side. She sits again*)

VICTORIA

—" 'till in the bitterness of my heart' "—We were further on than that. " 'I curse God and die!' " Are you comfortable, my heart?

(*His hand goes to his head convulsively, and rumples his hair. Instinctively he tries to smooth it again.* VICTORIA *does it for him and takes the occasion to kiss his forehead*)

Beloved. . . . There, it's all in nice again.

(*She resumes her reading*)

" 'Child of my sorrow' "—Oh, I'm always losing the place. Let's see. Oh, here. " 'Oh, she was as a crown of green palms to my grey locks; and she must wither in a night like a gourd of Jonah! Child of my love—child of my old age' "—Oh!

(*She has forgotten his medicine. She pours it, supports his head on her arm, and drops it down his mouth. He shudders. She fondles his face, presses her lips to the crown of his head, and replaces him in his former position, smoothing the coverlet. Before she puts his hand beneath the covers, she lays it to her cheek. She essays to read Ivanhoe once more*)

VICTORIA

" 'Child of my sorrow,' he said, 'well shouldst thou be called——' " Does *Ivanhoe* interest you, dearest?

(*In glancing at him she sees an ornament displaced; she orders it, and returns to her book*)

" 'She was as a crown of green palms——' "

ALBERT

Meine Fräuchen.

VICTORIA

(*Jumping up and letting the book drop to the floor*)

What is it, my love?

ALBERT

Ich will—I want musik. A chorale—but at a distance—far away——

(*She hastens to the door*)

Alice—my daughter should play for me.

(VICTORIA *opens the door slightly and whispers to someone outside*)

Close the door. Music—way—way—away.

(*She recloses the door and returns to the bed*)

I want to hear Bach.

VICTORIA

Oh, I told her Luther!

(*She makes for the door*)

ALBERT

Luther is good—Luther is good.

(*She returns. An organ in the distance plays "Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott." She sits holding his hand as they listen. Soon he begins to repeat the words. Her head nods as a mother's will when her son is "reciting a piece." The music stops, but he continues for a line or so. His mind wanders*)

Nicht, Ernst, nicht, meine Bruder. Play soft—it is Bach, not *opera bouffe.* Ach, you have no soul for music, my brother. Now once more—*ein, zwei, drei —spiel.* Nicht—*Nicht*—NICHT. *Pianissimo,* not fortissimo! Oh, Ernst, we shall never learn this duet!

VICTORIA

(*In consternation*)

Albert, my soul! You are not playing, and your brother Ernst is not here—our daughter Alice was playing, not you, dearest Albert. I am here—I—don't you—don't you *know me,* my heart's heart?

ALBERT

(*His mind returns from its wandering—he strokes her cheek and murmurs*)

Liebes Fräuchen.

(*She is reasurred*)

Gutes Weibchen.

VICTORIA

(*Almost purring*)

Ah. . . .

(*She sits again. But his mind strays off once more*)

ALBERT

Palmerston—if he had not resigned—what is the song? "Little Al, the royal pal"——

VICTORIA

Oh, merciful heavens!

ALBERT

"German lad has acted sad." . . . Must make a memorandum.

(*She has flown to the door and whispered excitedly to the person outside, who evidently goes away. She stands, alternately looking out and back at the Prince*)

Memorandum—Palmerston resigned—order, my love, always order—deliberate always before you act, my heart——

(SIR JAMES CLARK, *the royal physician, enters hastily. He goes through all the motions—feels the patient's pulse, his forehead, listens to his heart-beats, counts his pulse again.* ALBERT *is still in delirium*)

They are howling at me, my love, not at you. I have done nothing to them, why should they hate me? *Spiel, Ernst, spiel.* Ah, Coburg! . . .

VICTORIA

Oh, doctor—Sir James!

SIR JAMES

(*Trying to be cheerful*)

Er—er—a slight delirium, Your Majesty—The fever. . . .

ALBERT

Musik—Now, Ernst, we will play the organ—*ein, zwei*——

VICTORIA

(*Wringing her hands*)

Sir James! Sir James!

SIR JAMES

(*With forced cheerfulness*)

There is nothing to cause alarm. . . .

VICTORIA

(*Catching the forced note in his voice*)

Is there any danger?

SIR JAMES

No—er—that is to say——

(*He stops and is unable to look at her. She gazes about the room, agonized, helpless, as though expecting aid to come from the corners or the ceiling*)

ALBERT

You are always right, Stockmar. If Prussia were strong—England must be strong, too—The English do not make music—Play for me, my brother. We will learn—we will learn——

VICTORIA

(*Sinking to her knees beside the bed, speaking through suppressed hysteria*)

Es ist kleines Fräuchen—kleines Fräuchen——

ALBERT

(*Singing*)

Du bist verrückt——

VICTORIA

Albert, don't you know me?

ALBERT

(*Continuing*)

Mein Kind——

VICTORIA

Your wife, Albert, your love—Drina—your Drina. Albert, my darling, my soul, I am here. *Don't you know me?*

(*The* FOOTMAN *enters.* CLARK *motions him to go away. But the* FOOTMAN *has an important message to deliver.* CLARK *goes to him.* VICTORIA *continues to mumble*)

SIR JAMES

Sh—sh.

FOOTMAN

Pardon, Sir James, but——

SIR JAMES

Sh—sh.

FOOTMAN

Lord Palmerston is here.

SIR JAMES

Tell him to go away.

FOOTMAN

He is accompanied by the American Ambassador. He must see Her Majesty.

SIR JAMES

Her Majesty can see no one.

(*He turns away. The* FOOTMAN *goes.* SIR JAMES *has scarcely begun to concoct a medicine before the* FOOTMAN *returns.* SIR JAMES *moves to him*)

No—no——

(*He points to the door*)

FOOTMAN

Lord Palmerston bade me say that he would not venture to intrude at such a moment were it not that a situation involving war or peace in both hemispheres has arisen.

SIR JAMES

Go, go—GO.

FOOTMAN

Lord Palmerston bade me inform Her Majesty that——

SIR JAMES

Sh—sh——

(*He goes out followed by the sorrowing* FOOTMAN. ALBERT *is now quiet.* VICTORIA *is still kneeling, stroking his hand, kissing it, fondling his face, mumbling endearments.* SIR JAMES *re-enters and approaches her. He speaks with a professional sick-bed intonation*)

Your Majesty——

(*She doesn't heed. He lifts his voice slightly*)

Er—Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

(*Dazed*)

Eh?

SIR JAMES

Pray pardon an intrusion on your thoughts at such a moment——

VICTORIA

(*Sharply*)

What is it, Sir James?

SIR JAMES

(*Taken aback*)

Er—er—He begs me to beg Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Who begs?

SIR JAMES

Er—er—Lord Palmerston.

VICTORIA

Oh!

(*It is a little cry of anguish and anger. Her arm goes out to shield* ALBERT. *She collects herself*)

What does he want?

SIR JAMES

He begs——

VICTORIA

Pray be brief.

SIR JAMES

Lord Palmerston, accompanied by the American Ambassador, Mr. Charles Francis Adams, has come to the Palace——

VICTORIA

Present my compliments to Mr. Adams, and say that Her Majesty regrets that she cannot receive him.

SIR JAMES

Pardon my insistence, Your Majesty, but a matter of great moment has arisen.

VICTORIA

Nothing is of moment now—nothing—nothing. . . .

SIR JAMES

Two envoys, loyal to Mr. Jefferson Davis, have been removed from the Trent, a British steamer, by officers of President Lincoln. Mr. Adams has instructions from his government in reply to our demand for an explanation.

(*He waits.* VICTORIA *is occupied with* ALBERT)

What action will Your Majesty take?

VICTORIA

My love——

SIR JAMES

The affair is critical.

VICTORIA

My soul——

SIR JAMES

It may mean war with our American cousins.

VICTORIA

Oh, I don't care—I don't care about *anything.*

(*Slowly* ALBERT, *who has been lying quietly, moves his arm and feebly pushes her away. She looks at the arm in amazement not unmixed with joy at his lucidity. He pushes her again. Without a word, she rises and goes out. His arm falls limply. He lies absolutely still.* SIR JAMES *approaches him in trepidation, picks up his hand.* ALBERT *jerks it away, rises on the other elbow*)

ALBERT

See, my love—a palace all of crystal—like jewels in the sun—see—see—how it rises—up—up—to heaven. All glass, my heart, high as a church, higher, higher, hi—gh—er——

(*His voice loud and full*)

Victoria!

(*He collapses and dies*)

(SIR JAMES *is frantic. He rushes to the bed, listens for* ALBERT'S *heart, feels his pulse, examines his eyes, and gives up. He looks about the room stupidly, suddenly rushes out, leaving the door open. A gasp,*

an exclamation, are heard, then a sort of dull running about, as though several persons were scurrying aimlessly. VICTORIA *comes hurtling into the room, straight to the bed, looks once at the corpse, and shrieks—one long wild shriek*)

INTERMISSION

SIXTH EPISODE

Reception Room in Buckingham Palace
The Early 'Seventies

SIXTH EPISODE

It is some time during the premiership of Mr. Gladstone, before Disraeli's second accession to power in 1874. *The scene is the same chamber as the fourth episode, save that Albert's table has been removed. It is the Queen's birthday (she is between* 50 *and* 60), *and the room is cluttered with stiff and formal floral emblems, ponderous and beribboned. Amid these melancholy tokens of festivity, Victoria sits at her solitary table, going through routine documents, grimly, determinedly, and quite without interest. The aging* FOOTMAN *enters, bearing yet more floral tokens.*

(FOOTMAN)

(*Announcing*)

From the Lord Mayor of London. From the—er —er—the City of Birmingham.

(VICTORIA *pays no heed; she does not even glance at the flowers. The* FOOTMAN *finds a place for the latest offerings and goes out. The* QUEEN *drops her work, glances at the table of flowers, picks up* ALBERT'S *photograph and gazes at it with affectionate melancholy. She sighs and resumes her labors. The* FOOTMAN *brings in a huge sheaf of roses and a formal "piece" of lilies—the latter the stiffest of*

the whole lot. He offers them to the QUEEN *as the butler would a platter at dinner. Referring to the roses*)

From the House of Commons.

(*To the lilies*)

From Her Majesty's Government.

(VICTORIA *turns and looks at them—coldly*)

VICTORIA

Find a place for them.

(*The man puts them in the most conspicuous position*)

Have you forgotten that we are leaving for Scotland and the silver is not yet put away?

FOOTMAN

Oh, I beg pardon.

(*He goes out hastily. The* QUEEN *regards the flowers, turns her back on them very pointedly, and embroiders with angry agitation. The* FOOTMAN *returns with a rosewood case of "flat" silver. He puts it on the desk.* VICTORIA *lays aside her fancy work, rises, opens the case, removes a list and the bundle of forks, and counts them*)

VICTORIA

Twenty-four forks—One, two three . . .

FOOTMAN

I beg pardon, Your Majesty, but Mr. Gladstone presents his compliments and craves an audience.

VICTORIA

Four, five—We will receive Mr. Gladstone.

(*As the* FOOTMAN *is departing*)

Don't bring any more flowers in here. Seven, eight, ten . . .

FOOTMAN

Very well, Your Majesty.

(*He throws open the door on the left and announces*)

Mr. William Ewart Gladstone.

(*He exits as* GLADSTONE *enters. The Prime Minister is apparelled as for a State occasion. . .He is more than* 60 *years old and already bears the weight of "Grand Old Man." Very solemnly he kisses the* QUEEN'S *hand*)

GLADSTONE

In the name of Your Majesty's Ministers and of myself, Your Majesty's Prime Minister, I desire to congratulate Your Majesty on the anniversary of her birth. The vastness of Your Majesty's Empire, the success of Your Majesty's armies and fleets, and the prosperity of Your Majesty's subjects, have made this day a day of rejoicing throughout the length and breadth of this great realm.

VICTORIA

Has it? Fourteen . . .

GLADSTONE

(*Deflated*)

Pardon?

VICTORIA

Does the nation rejoice?

GLADSTONE

The British people, Your Majesty, have for their sovereign an affection unparalleled in——

VICTORIA

(*Interrupting*)

Then the House of Commons does not truly represent the British people. Eighteen, twenty, twenty-four.

(*The forks are all there. She wraps them up, replaces them and begins on the knives. Quite at a loss to know how to take her asperity,* GLADSTONE *looks about for aid. He finds it in the great sheaf of roses presented by the House of Commons*)

GLADSTONE

The House, Your Majesty, voted unanimously to make this slight offering——

VICTORIA

I am quite shocked at the way the House goes on, Mr. Gladstone. They really bring discredit on Constitutional Government. One, two . . .

GLADSTONE

(*Misunderstanding*)

But flowers on such a momentous occasion are most appropriate.

VICTORIA

I refer to the current debate on the appropriation for the support of the Crown. Five, six, seven . . .

GLADSTONE

(*In his best debating manner*)

The subject of that debate, Your Majesty, properly to be apprehended, would require a detailed knowledge of the condition of the National Exchequer. In the present state of the public finances to vote a grant of 60,000 pounds per annum for the Sovereign's private use in addition to the grant of 385,000 pounds per annum to defray the expenses of the royal Household and to support the honor and dignity of the Crown is considered perhaps a bit excessive.

VICTORIA

Excessive!

GLADSTONE

Your Majesty will agree that since the demise of the Prince Consort and Your Majesty's continued seclusion, the expenditures for both these purposes have been very considerably diminished.

VICTORIA

So the royal menage is to be conducted like a tradesman's household.

(*Emphatically*)

Twelve, thirteen . . .

GLADSTONE

Oh, Your Majesty misapprehends. It is merely that the state of the public finances—Now, if Your Majesty would consent to resume the ceremonial functions of the Crown——

VICTORIA

Ah, then, the public finances would be sufficient to defray all expenses? The House demands value received. Is that it, Mr. Gladstone? Eighteen, nineteen . . .

GLADSTONE

Really, Your Majesty——

VICTORIA

Is that not so, Mr. Gladstone?

GLADSTONE

Your Majesty is aware that the continuous mourning for the Prince Consort and the protracted seclusion which that mourning involves not only casts a gloom over high society, not only deprives the populace of the opportunity to see the glorious person of the Sovereign and to be inspired by the vision of her splendor, but also exercises a most deleterious effect upon the dressmaking, millinery and hosiery trades. The dearth of state functions deprives them of much of their income and——

VICTORIA

(*Quite seriously*)

Why has no one called my attention before to this aspect of my retirement? Twenty-one, twenty-two.

GLADSTONE

(*Feels he has won*)

The whole world respected too profoundly Your Majesty's sorrow.

VICTORIA

That sorrow does not diminish with time, Mr. Gladstone. Twenty-four.

(*The knives are all there. She puts them in the case and begins on the spoons*)

GLADSTONE

Your Majesty's immersion in grief has set an example for all lovers in the Empire.

VICTORIA

All the more reason why I should adhere to my grief. Even if I *could* forget my bereavement, Mr. Gladstone, what you have just said would make me desire that the world should not know I had forgotten my great loss. But I can *never* forget. One, two, three . . .

GLADSTONE

(*With desperate persistence*)

There have been rumors that Your Majesty will emerge from your retirement.

VICTORIA

They are false rumors, Mr. Gladstone. Five, six . . .

GLADSTONE

But if Your Majesty will deign to consider the necessity——

VICTORIA

The whole subject sir, is *extremely* distasteful. Eight, nine . . .

GLADSTONE

(*After a moment*)

I am aware of Your Majesty's reluctance in this matter and of the exquisite delicacy that prompts it; but if you would consent to appear at intervals—even at long intervals——

VICTORIA

I cannot give the populace its pageantry, Mr. Gladstone. My heart is too heavy. Eleven, twelve . . .

GLADSTONE

On Thursday of next week a bronze statue of Wordsworth, the late poet laureate, is to be unveiled in Hammersmith. If your Majesty would honor the occasion——

VICTORIA

There are higher duties than mere representation which are now thrown upon the Queen alone and unassisted. Fourteen, fifteen . . .

GLADSTONE

A royal progress through London on Thursday next would do much to dispel the—er—the—er——

VICTORIA

I am quite aware of my unpopularity,

(*He makes a gesture of protest*)

and of the attacks of the Chartists and other horrible radicals on both the theory and the practice of the Monarchy. Sixteen, seventeen . . .

GLADSTONE

Every Englishman, of whatever class or condition, however prosperous or poor, whether educated or ignorant—every Englishman, Your Majesty, realizes that the Monarchy as it exists is a vital element of the British Constitution. Every Englishman——

VICTORIA

Well, as long as there *is* a Monarchy and *I* am the Monarch, I will exercise the privilege of a Monarch and perform my duties as my conscience directs. Nineteen, twenty . . .

GLADSTONE

(*Trying to be gay*)

Ah, then, surely the royal conscience will direct that Your Majesty appear at the unveiling of the bronze statue to Wordsworth on Thursday——

VICTORIA

Mr. Gladstone, I will *not* appear at the unveiling of the bronze statue to Wordsworth on Thursday. That is *final.*

(*The Prime Minister bows and stands uncomfortably. It is scarcely an auspicious moment for him to take his departure, nor yet can he find reason to do otherwise. He longs for an interruption. It comes*)

Twenty-two, twenty-three. Twenty-three——

(*Excitedly*)

A silver spoon is missing!

(*Her voice has suddenly grown loud. The* FOOTMAN *hurriedly enters*)

A silver spoon is missing!

(*The* FOOTMAN *searches under the table,* VICTORIA *in the case*)

Where can it be? Could it have been stolen?

(*The search becomes more energetic.* MR. GLADSTONE *joins in rather gingerly*)

I wouldn't lose it for *anything.* I have had this silver since my marriage. The Prince Consort gave it to me. It was made in Coburg. Where can it —Ah—h——

(GLADSTONE *has found it beneath her chair. He presents it to her with the same dignified flourish that he would offer her an empire*)

Oh, *thank* you *so* much, Mr. Gladstone. Albert was as fond of this silver as of that vase.

(*She proceeds to arrange the pieces, to close and lock the box, then she takes up her fancy work again. Once more the Prime Minister stands uncomfortably. Finally he clears his throat*)

GLADSTONE

If Your Majesty will permit, I should like to call attention to a matter which has been agitating the Government for some time. It is in the nature of a reform——

VICTORIA

I live in an atmosphere of interminable reform.

GLADSTONE

This reform is not political; it concerns the wearing of beards in the Navy.

VICTORIA

(*Turning in her chair*)

I have been studying that question.

GLADSTONE

The British sailor who has carried the flag to every port and keeps it flying on every sea is hampered in two ways by the present regulations requiring him to shave. First, the difficulty of the actual act of shaving on a rolling sea, and, secondly, the strongly masculine aspect which hair gives to sailors' faces.

VICTORIA

I approve *very much* of beards in the Navy.

GLADSTONE

Ah, that is gratifying. But some members of Your Majesty's Government maintain that shaven men have an appearance of cleanliness which unshaven ones have not. I myself feel that the argument is negated by the fact that a man with a beard is less likely to be unkempt than a man who has neglected to shave for a day or so.

VICTORIA

We are entirely in accord.

GLADSTONE

On the other hand——

VICTORIA

I have reached a decision, Mr. Gladstone. My own personal feeling would be for the beards without the mustaches, as the latter have a rather soldier-like appearance.

GLADSTONE

Quite so.

VICTORIA

But since the object in view is to prevent the necessity of shaving, it had better be as proposed! the entire beard. Only it should be kept short and *very* clean, and on no account should mustaches be allowed without beards. And the beard must be *under* the chin like the Prince Consort's. That must be *clearly* understood.

GLADSTONE

It shall be, Your Majesty, it shall be. How great is England's fortune to be governed by a Queen of such perspicacity, intellect and lofty ideals, who is inspired——

FOOTMAN

Mr. Benjamin Disraeli.

VICTORIA

(*Showing relief and delight*)

We will receive him.

(*To* GLADSTONE, *in dismissal*)

I am *deeply* appreciative of your lofty sentiments and kind wishes.

(*He bows over her hand*)

GLADSTONE

Perhaps Your Majesty will reconsider the matter of appearing at Hammersmith on the occasion——

VICTORIA

(*Sharply*)

No! I will *not* reconsider and I will *not* appear.

(GLADSTONE *goes. At the door he encounters* DISRAELI)

DISRAELI

Ah, Mr. Gladstone! Good morning, sir.

(*To the* QUEEN, *gaily*)

Has he been making the bricks of the future with the straw of reform?

GLADSTONE

(*Gravely*)

Good morning, sir.

(*Exit*)

VICTORIA

(*Warmly*)

Oh, Mr. Disraeli, I am *so* glad you have come.

DISRAELI

There is no honor and no reward that can ever equal the possession of Your Majesty's kind thoughts. All my own thoughts and feelings and duties and affections are now concentrated in Your Majesty, and I desire nothing more for my remaining years than to serve Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

(*Sighing with pleasure*)

Ah, sir, how your words soothe my troubled heart!

DISRAELI

Today I ought fitly, perhaps, to congratulate a powerful Sovereign on the vastness of her Empire, the prosperity of her subjects, and the success and strength of her fleets and armies. But I cannot; my mind is in another mood. I can only think of the strangeness of my destiny that it has come to pass that I should be the servant of one so great, and whose infinite kindness, the brightness of whose intelligence and the firmness of whose will, have enabled me to undertake labors to which I otherwise would be unequal. Upon the Sovereign of many lands and many hearts may an omnipotent Providence shed every blessing that the wise can desire and the virtuous deserve.

VICTORIA

I am *deeply* moved by your *beautiful* sentiments.

DISRAELI

But it is not to my Sovereign that I present my homage and my supernal affection on this day fortunate above all other days of the year—It is to my Faerie Queen—my Faerie—that I pay my profound reverence.

(VICTORIA *wipes her eyes, much affected, and silently holds out a hand to him. He kneels and kisses it. Heretofore he has held his left hand behind his back. Now he brings it forth, holding a primrose*)

VICTORIA

(*Taking the flower*)

How exquisitely *lovely!*

DISRAELI

Once when I was ill and melancholy and almost despairing there came to me like the promise of a new day a cluster of primroses—plucked by the incomparable hand of my Faerie—and in her gracious condescension despatched to me. At once, as by a miracle, I was healed! And from that moment primroses have been to me the ambassadors of spring, the very gems and jewels of Nature.

(*The* QUEEN *cups the flower in her hand and presses it to her face. She sighs. An idea comes to her. She goes to the table where the Government's lilies are and lays the primroses for a moment beside them. She looks at* DISRAELI *to remark the contrast*)

VICTORIA

Simple and true like you, Mr. Disraeli.

(*A pause*)

I like it so much better for being wild.

(*Another pause. She touches the roses and gestures to the other floral tributes*)

They pity me and not my grief. I have had a *terrible* interview with Mr. Gladstone.

DISRAELI

(*Sympathetically*)

My Faerie! . . .

VICTORIA

He is always instituting some odious reform.

DISRAELI

Mr. Gladstone possesses all the virtues.

VICTORIA

I am *determined* that *no one* is to lead or guide or dictate to *me*.

DISRAELI

You are unable, Madam, to mete out full justice to Mr. Gladstone, due no doubt to his unhappy manner of presentation.

VICTORIA

He speaks to me as if I were a public meeting!

DISRAELI

He is indeed a sophisticated rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and withal dwindling into senility.

VICTORIA

Oh, Mr. Disraeli, how *perfectly* you express it!

DISRAELI

And now, my Faerie, let us permit no cloud to mar the untrammeled lambency of this day of days. No cares, my liege. Let us forget everything except that life is but a dazzling farce and an engrossing game.

VICTORIA

But oh, sir, how fearful it is to be suspected, uncheered—unguided and unadvised—and how alone the poor Queen feels!

DISRAELI

The price of genius and supreme greatness, my Faerie.

VICTORIA

But when the Prince was with me all was so different.

DISRAELI

How well I comprehend that. The Prince is the only person whom I have ever known who realized the Ideal. There was in him a union of manly grace and sublime simplicity, of chivalry with the intellectual splendor of the Attic Academe. The only character in English history that would in some respects draw near to him is Sir Philip Sidney; the same high tone, the same universal accomplishments, the same blended tenderness and vigor, the same rare combination of romantic energy and classic repose. My acquaintance with the Prince has been one of the most satisfactory incidents of my life; full of refined and beautiful memories, and exercising, as I hope, over my remaining existence, a soothing and exalting influence.

VICTORIA

Oh, Mr. Disraeli! The depth and delicacy of these touches!

DISRAELI

If I could by so much lighten your burden, my Queen and my Faerie, I should consider myself the most fortunate of men, the blessed of the Almighty, and the favored of His greatest servant.

VICTORIA

My burdens seem to fall away when you. speak, sir.

(*At the mantelpiece*)

Heavens! This vase right on the edge. It might have fallen off and been broken! How *can* servants be so thoughtless?

DISRAELI

Not thoughtless, madam. Thoughtful—of everything but their duties.

VICTORIA

I wouldn't have it get broken for *worlds*. Albert was *so* fond of it. He said it reminded him of me. . . .

(*She fondles it tenderly, sentimentally, and then places it securely on the shelf again*)

DISRAELI

Grace and beauty without parallel. . . .

VICTORIA

Those were the very words *he* used.

(*She sighs*)

There is magic in your tongue, sir.

(*She has an idea. Roguishly, sweetly, she sticks the primrose in the vase. She looks*

at him diffidently; he smiles, she smiles. Shyly she turns to the mantel—and is instantly transformed)

Heavens! It's dusty!

(*She pulls the bell-rope*)

DISRAELI

Nature's humane provision, my Faerie. There must be a film of dust about you, else your dazzling brilliance would blind the eyes of all mankind.

(*The* FOOTMAN *enters*)

(*Pointing to the mantel*)

Dust!

(*He is stunned, recovers, starts towards the door, remembers he has a handkerchief, produces it, and uses it vigorously on the mantel-shelf*)

DISRAELI

If only the dust that gathers on men's minds could be so swiftly eliminated. The dust on England's mind! You, only you, my Faerie, can dispel it! One breath, my liege, and England is herself again!

VICTORIA

Oh, Mr. Disraeli, if only you were my Prime Minister again! I pray every night for it to come to pass. There would be no more odious reforms.

DISRAELI

Be not too sure of that, my Faerie. There are dangerous things within me. My mind is a continental mind; it is a revolutionary mind. I am only truly great in action. And I might desire to be truly great.

VICTORIA

(*Comfortably*)

I have no fear. If you were my First Minister all —*everything* would be well and I would be *so happy*.

(WALES *hurtles into the room*)

WALES

Congratulations, mamma. I hope you have a happy birthday.

(*He kisses her cheek*)

VICTORIA

It is half over already.

WALES

(*Affecting gaiety*)

Never too late——

VICTORIA

Why did you not appear at breakfast?

WALES

(*He is afraid of her*)

Well, I—I—mamma, dear, I had to——

VICTORIA

(*Sternly*)

What?

WALES

I had to hurry away because—because—certain events, you see——

VICTORIA

What events, Bertie?

WALES

Why—er—er——

(*He looks appealingly at* DISRAELI)

VICTORIA

What events?

WALES

Well—er—it's—it's—the *Times* this morning——

VICTORIA

(*Puzzled*)

The *Times?*

WALES

Yes, the *Times* newspaper. But they are always glad when they can print things about us—about prominent people. They delight in it. You would think their malice gave them pleasure. Whether it's true or not——

VICTORIA

What *are* you talking about?

WALES

You don't know!

VICTORIA

Know what?

WALES

About me—I mean, you haven't read——!

(VICTORIA *looks inquiringly at* DISRAELI, *although she knows already that the news will be distressing. Her face hardens.* DISRAELI *silently hands her a copy of the paper, folded. A headline immediately jumps out at her. As she reads, her expression grows grimmer and grimmer*)

VICTORIA

Is this true? Are you called as a witness in a divorce case?

WALES

(*Like a terrified little boy*)

Ye—es, Mamma.

(*She reads a few sentences more*)

DISRAELI

(*Aside, to* WALES)

What shall you tell the court?

WALES

(*With dignity*)

The truth, like any other Englishman.

VICTORIA

Are you really implicated in this?

WALES

(*Again the terrified little boy*)

N—no, mamma—n—not really—I——

VICTORIA

(*Throwing away the paper. Her hand trembles with anger*)

You dared to do such a thing!

WALES

No, mamma.

VICTORIA

My oldest son has cast disgrace on the Crown and tarnished his sacred father's memory! Soiled the greatest name in the world and besmirched the most beautiful figure in English history! No wonder the House of Commons dares denude the Throne of its prerogatives when the heir to the Throne makes himself the subject of the lowest gossip! That's the reason the people positively dislike me and despise all royalty. That explains everything. It is intolerable.

(*Right at* WALES)

I will not endure it.

WALES

(*Weakly*)

Mamma.

VICTORIA

(*Focusing her anger on him*)

You whom your father brought up so carefully, watched over *all* your studies and *all* your games and—and—— Go to your room and don't leave it until I tell you to.

(*He slinks out rear and as he is closing the doors her hands reach towards him*)

Bertie!

(*But he is gone. She does not repeat the cry; the moralist conquers the mother. But her spirit is broken; her anger dissolves into sorrow. She weeps*)

DISRAELI

(*Sympathetically*)

Madam.

VICTORIA

My life is crumbling about me.

DISRAELI

(*Really moved*)

How can Your Majesty utter such words when all England, all the world——?

VICTORIA

Albert's son. . . .

DISRAELI

The Prince, Your Majesty, is not entangled in this affair. He is merely summoned by the court, as an Englishman, to tell what he knows of the case. And like a true Englishman, believing in justice and the administration of the law, he will respond to the summons.

VICTORIA

It is too shameful! Oh, sir, I would I were some poor peasant woman grubbing in the fields.

DISRAELI

My Faerie!

VICTORIA

Oh, why should I remain Queen of England, when England does not wish a queen? And after me my successor, *my son,* will mount the Throne, soiled with the mud of the gutter. Why should I go on? Why should I not abdicate?

DISRAELI

(*Startled*)

Your Majesty!

VICTORIA

(*The idea takes hold of her*)

The monarchy can be abolished, *all* of Mr. Gladstone's hateful reforms adopted. Perhaps then my enemies will leave me alone.

DISRAELI

No sane human being could be the enemy of so glorious a Queen.

VICTORIA

The great sorrow and anxiety and hard work of ten years, alone, unaided, with increasing age and never very strong health are breaking me down. And now this *awful* thing that Bertie has done will increase the irremediable antagonism between the Throne and the Nation. Oh, I am indeed on a dreary sad pinnacle of solitary grandeur.

DISRAELI

Your Majesty is momentarily depressed by the Prince's youthful misadventure. It is common to all youths to——

VICTORIA

I knew Albert in his youth!

DISRAELI

(*Trying again*)

The youth of this generation——

VICTORIA

England is weary of me—I have lived too long.

DISRAELI

England was never prouder.

VICTORIA

The people are discontented.

DISRAELI

My Faerie has but to let the populace gaze upon her effulgent person, and the resplendent light which emanates from Your Majesty will wither it like a flower exposed to the sun's too brilliant rays.

VICTORIA

Albert's son—*his* son. . . .

(*She turns to the mantel, rests an arm upon it, her cheek on her arm. Her body shakes with dry sobs. But soon she controls herself, lifts her head, and as she does so her arm upsets the vase. It falls to the floor and breaks*)

Oh, *our* vase!

(*She falls on her knees and gathers the larger fragments as though they might be put together again*)

DISRAELI

(*For once at a loss*)

It is only a little vase.

VICTORIA

Albert admired it. The day he arrived in England from Coburg he remarked this vase and admired it. It was my favorite, too. And now it is gone—shattered—like my life. . . .

(*A pause. She has a terrible idea*)

Perhaps, some day the memory of him will be shattered like this vase and my life! . . .

DISRAELI

(*Picking up the primrose from the floor*)

The vase is broken, my Faerie, but this primrose lives; its loveliness is undiminished. The flower lives and glows, fragrant and exquisite. The life of a good man is like a flower—not a vase. It cannot be shattered, and, though it may seem to fade in death, its perfume is eternal because every good deed that men do after it is a renewal of its memory. Albert will live, my Faerie, so long as a single Englishman is kind and just and noble. And is there not another lesson you and I can learn from this little flower?

(*He places it gently in her hand*)

The plant renews itself. The old plant has lovelier blossoms than the young. So we, who are *alive,* we cannot be shattered like a vase. We go on into the future, and as we march forward we put forth new and finer blossoms in our ancient springs.

VICTORIA

I wish it had not been broken. . . .

DISRAELI

It was a perishable bauble, my Faerie. But I shall lay at your feet an enduring bauble, a lovelier bauble, a bauble that the great of the earth have ever yearned to possess, and none has ever achieved, because before you no one had arrived at a splendor that could rival its splendor. No one in all history, save only you, could bring to it a greatness equal to the great-

ness it confers. But you who have reached the pinnacle of power, the apex of ambition, the supreme summit of mundane magnificence; you who stand like a star high above the world of little men and little hopes, like a star clear and crystalline against the very heavens themselves—you, most lustrous of Sovereigns, will honor it more than it can honor you. It will be but another jewel in your dazzling diadem, my Faerie, my Queen, my Empress. Empress of India!

VICTORIA

(*Unconsciously her head rears up proudly*)

Oh!

(*But her sadness returns. She rises with* DISRAELI'S *aid, goes to the table and regards* ALBERT'S *photograph*)

My people crying out against me, hating me. . . . Oh, my love, my love—I am so alone. If you were with me! If you were only here! . . .

DISRAELI

If the Prince were here would he, whose sense of duty shone with the rare effulgence of the most lustrous star and was as unwavering as the sun at midday, would he permit Your Majesty to let a moment of dejection cast England into the depths and endanger the existence of the Empire, of the very nation itself?

(*She gazes up at* DISRAELI)

Would *he* not counsel you to continue on the way to a greatness such as no mortal has ever before attained—Dictatress of Europe—Empress of India?

VICTORIA

(*After a moment*)

It is not possible. And if it were. . . .

(*She glances at the* Times *on the floor and shrugs dejectedly*)

DISRAELI

The greatest Sovereign that ever has been or that ever will be must have the greatest position men can bestow; she must stand upon the apex of the world. She *shall* be Empress of India!

VICTORIA

I, who cannot control even my own son!

DISRAELI

The Prince, were he alive, would urge Your Majesty to set an example to all parents suffering from the rashness of their sons. Would he not take your hand and walk proudly into the streets of London saying to all mankind, "Behold how a Queen can bear sorrow?"

(*This has a marked effect on her*)

Does there not come from the impenetrable zone wherein his rare spirit dwells a voice, heard only by my Faerie's inner soul; a voice from the region of all wisdom, uttering the single word 'Duty'?"

(*She stares at* DISRAELI *with wide eyes. She looks at the photograph of* ALBERT)

VICTORIA

You always said we should rise superior to our troubles—be greater than they—greater. . . .

(*She reaches a resolution, pulls the bell-rope, then returns to the picture. The* FOOTMAN *enters*)

Despatch a messenger to Downing Street and inform the Prime Minister that Her Majesty consents to appear in Hammersmith on Thursday, and will unveil the statue of the poet Wordsworth.

(*The* FOOTMAN *goes*)

DISRAELI

My Queen, My Empress, My faerie Mistress of the World!

VICTORIA

(*Having made her decision, her dejection passes, and she is all energy and activity*)

We have much work to do, Mr. Disraeli. I shall lean heavily upon you.

DISRAELI

A burden that would honor the gods themselves.

VICTORIA

You will lunch here and remain *all* the afternoon.

DISRAELI

My duties elsewhere—in the House of Commons—will require——

VICTORIA

My requirement takes precedence.

DISRAELI

But, Madam——

VICTORIA

I command.

(DISRAELI *makes a deep bow and goes out to despatch a messenger to the House. The* QUEEN *stands staring as at some mirage. Her voice is faint, a whisper*)

Empress of India!

(*She turns slowly to* ALBERT'S *photograph*)

And alone. . . .

(*She picks up the photograph and gazes at it*)

My son—and not in your image. . . .

(*Bitterly*)

Empress of India! I am just an old woman—a lonely old woman. . . .

(*Then with a strong lift of her head*)

He would have me conquer even age—for England!

(DISRAELI *returns*)

Mr. Disraeli, if I should become the Empress of India——

DISRAELI

My Faerie *will* be Empress of India.

VICTORIA

Then I must understand *everything* about my Empire—even Ireland. Now, just what *is* the trouble in Ireland? I have tried again and again to master that question and have never quite succeeded. Certainly you, sir, can elucidate it. And when I understand it perfectly, I will consult with you, and together we will settle this Irish Question once for all.

DISRAELI

(*Bowing low over her hand*)

England, my Empress, is perpetually doing that.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SEVENTH EPISODE

Throne Room in Buckingham Palace

June 20, 1897

SEVENTH EPISODE

It is the Diamond Jubilee, in June, 1897.

On the glistening floor of the throne room of Buckingham Palace there is no furniture whatever, but at the extreme rear, on a platform, facing toward us, is the ornate, empty throne, backed by a richly embroidered velvet hanging. On our right, toward the front, are tall doors, and in the opposite wall high windows through which we see the gray-blue of the twilight sky. Some of that twilight blue penetrates to dance in the crystal prisms of the gorgeous chandeliers.

Forming the center of the small group of men on the stage is MR. GLADSTONE. *He is 88 years old, and except for the footman, is the sole survivor from those earlier episodes we have witnessed. The representatives of the Dominions and Crown Colonies who surround him, some from the East in the costumes of their native lands and all bright with ribbons and decorations, are plainly mindful of his age and honors. When he speaks, there is silence.*

GLADSTONE

It was Mr. Chamberlain's idea to make this Diamond Jubilee a festival of the British Empire.

NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE

Splendid idea.

CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE

Let me fetch you a chair, Mr. Gladstone.

GLADSTONE

Thank you, sir, but I am not weary.

NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE

But you *will* be, Mr. Gladstone, before the evening is over.

GLADSTONE

Sir, I have lived eighty-eight years. Surely, that is time enough for one to learn how to take care of himself.

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE

At your age, sir, you have surely learned that to take care of oneself is a man's first duty.

SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE

And for you, Mr. Gladstone, it is also a duty to the Empire.

GLADSTONE

But, I repeat, I am not at all weary.

SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE

Vanity, sir, vanity.

NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE

You will break your endurance testing it so.

GLADSTONE

(*With dignity*)

I have never yet been seated in the presence of my Sovereign.

AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE

The Empress, too, will find these ceremonies fatiguing.

GLADSTONE

Nothing can fatigue Her Majesty.

CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE

She holds up marvellously under the strain of the various celebrations.

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE

Have there ever been such gorgeous ceremonies before in England?

AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE

No Queen anywhere has ever made such a triumphal progress through her capital. And the great review at Aldershot!

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE

I did not dream that Englishmen were capable of such enthusiasm.

GLADSTONE

A fitting climax to the most glorious reign in English history—in all history.

(*The doors on the left open and the aged* FOOTMAN *enters. He is now a major-domo with a staff. He seems even older than* GLADSTONE *and only his vast pride in his office keeps him tolerably erect and firm on his feet. During the moment that the doors are open a murmur of many voices and faint music is heard outside. The representatives think the* QUEEN *is about to appear, and form two lines to the throne. The Major-Domo proceeds up the room. A door beside the dais opens; the men kneel. But only the* PRINCE OF WALES *comes in. He is approaching old age, too. He motions to the guests to rise from their salute*)

WALES

(*To Major-Domo*)

Are the ambassadors all assembled?

MAJOR-DOMO

Mr. Whitelaw Reid, Ambassador Extraordinary of His Excellency, the President of the United States of America, has just arrived, Your Royal Highness. Should I ask him to come in?

WALES

No. I've told you half a dozen times that this is a brief reception for the representatives of the states of the Empire and for them only. The formal reception will follow.

MAJOR-DOMO

Beg pardon, Your Royal Highness.

WALES

Have *all* the ambassadors arrived?

MAJOR-DOMO

They are waiting in there, Your Royal Highness.

WALES

Very well, then.

(*Looking over the assemblage*)

Where is Lord Salisbury?

GLADSTONE

The Prime Minister is delivering the Jubilee address in the House, Your Royal Highness, and will come to the Palace later, heading the Commons' delegation.

WALES

Oh, yes—yes. That was on the agenda. I had forgotten.

(*He goes out rear. The* MAJOR-DOMO *follows. Immediately a flourish of trumpets. The guests take their places once more and assume deeply respectful attitudes. The* MAJOR-DOMO *returns. Then the* LORD CHAMBERLAIN)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

(*Announcing*)

Her Imperial Majesty, Victoria, by the grace of God, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Dominions overseas. Empress of India.

(*Another flourish of trumpets. Gentlemen bearing staffs back in; two Ladies of the Bedchamber back in. Finally,* VICTORIA *enters and mounts the dais. A long pause. Then she speaks in a quavering voice*)

VICTORIA

You come from the several parts of my Empire—of the British Empire. Through you to all my subjects I send this message: From my heart I thank all my beloved people in all quarters of the earth. May God bless them! For sixty years, with their loyal support, I have sat upon the Throne of England. I—I——

(She pauses, a faraway light, as of a memory, crossing her eyes)

I have tried to be good—to be a good Queen.

(She looks into the distance—a queer, little, fat figure, who somehow is regal. A band somewhere plays "God Save the Queen." She nods her head to the music, after a moment of rigid dignity, and smiles —a benign, old-lady smile)

THE END

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